

# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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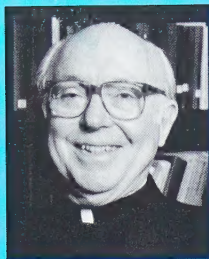
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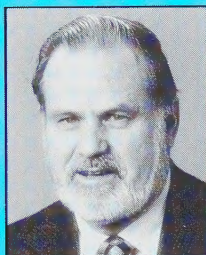




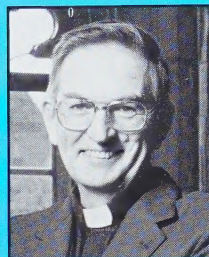
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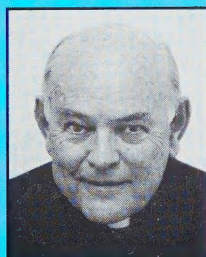
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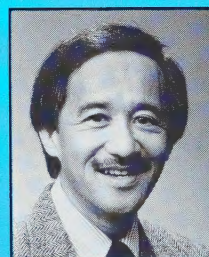
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Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

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# EDITOR'S PAGE

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## THE SEASON THAT TEACHES OUR WORTH

Americans are getting used to having social scientists redefine the nation's predominant character trait every ten years. The 1970s merited the narcissistic label "the me decade." The prevailing acquisitiveness during the 1980s provoked the title "the gimme decade." Recently—and once again in a reproachful way—the suggestion was made that we should identify the 1990s as "the look-at-me decade." Advocates say there is just too much bragging going on to tag it otherwise.

Writing in the *New York Times*, columnist Adam Bryant has epitomized the spirit of the 1990s by cynically amending a famous exhortation voiced by John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what you can do for your country or what your country can do for you, but whether the country has noted your efforts lately." Bryant selects compelling examples to demonstrate the epidemic proportions of braggadocio. Specifically, he cites the way the police in New York City are assuming all the credit for the significant drop in crime there; the claim by Louis Farrakhan that his Million Man March is what accomplished the same improvement; the announcement by American Airlines pilots that the industry's increased profitability is simply the fruit of their services; politician Dick Morris's announcement that it was his wisdom that got President Clinton reelected; and corporate businessman Albert J. Dunbay's boast that he is in the same league as Michael Jordan and Bruce Springsteen (to wit, "I'm a superstar in my field").

Sociologists offer a variety of explanations for the current trend toward self-adulation. At one extreme, Boston University professor Alan Wolf finds a pervasive sense of insecurity as the cause. He sees people exaggerating their own importance as a way of staving off the threat of being replaced through corporate or institutional downsizing. From the opposite point of view, George Washington University's Amitai Etzioni says that "we are tooting our

own horn" because America is "feeling its oats again after a long period of self-doubt. American-style capitalism is sweeping the world, and this country is no longer lagging behind in areas like car manufacturing." President Clinton gave support to Etzioni's opinion when he said in his recent State of the Union address, "I am proud to say that today, America is once again the most competitive nation and the number one exporter in the world."

Because a firm belief in one's personal worth is a basic requirement for building a happy and promising adult life, American educators have for years been striving to help young people improve their sense of self-esteem. But an ever-increasing number of suicides among adolescents, along with drug problems, teen pregnancies, abortions, and gang violence, still give ample evidence that this important goal has not yet been achieved. Teachers and coaches have been encouraging their students to value themselves for their good grades, the points they score in their competitive games, and the theatrical talents they display on the school stage. Yet too many young people still foolishly consider their designer jacket, brand of cigarette, or sexual prowess to be an accurate reflection of their personal worth. Unfortunately, these measurements of value are all flawed; they fail to reveal the moral character of the individual. It isn't easy for young people to put a finger on genuine indicators of their true and unique worth, but unless they learn how to deeply esteem who they are, and to like being who they are, they haven't a chance of loving their neighbor and turning our world into a better place to live.

In a God-designed way, our level of self-esteem affects nearly everything that we think, say, and do. It colors our view of the world and our place in it. It determines what we do with our lives and with whom we share them. Perhaps most important of all, the value we place on ourselves controls our ability to give and receive, especially love. It also measures what we can allow ourselves to hope for, from life as well as from God.



This month the church invites our hearts to enter into the spirit of Holy Week and Easter—the suffering and joy of our Lord. It seems to me that this is the one season that can help us all, young and old, to learn our true worth. Easter reminds us that each of us was created by God to share in the life and death of Jesus, and then to rise and live with God forever; that God loves us each personally—enough to take on flesh and blood, and to suffer, in order to wash away all our sins; that God's love for us is unconditional and is demonstrated by God's dwelling continually within our souls and guiding us through all the days and experiences of our life; that a home in heaven awaits us, filled with endless peace and happiness; and that our every heartache and tear will evaporate when our death brings the risen Lord to reach out and draw us close to his loving heart.

How fortunate the children who are taught to appreciate their individual worth by parents, teachers,

preachers, and others who help them explore the meaning of Easter! May the Holy Spirit help us share our beliefs and certainties with the young ones God brings near to us. And while we are celebrating this best of all seasons, let's not forget in our grateful prayers the persons who have shown us who we are and what we are worth, not in terms of performances and possessions but in light of the wondrous truths revealed about ourselves on the morning of the Lord's resurrection.



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.  
Editor-in-Chief

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(signed) James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., Editor-in-Chief



# New Skills Needed for Living Religious Life

*Katherine Hanley, C.S.J.*

I've been doing vocation work for my community for some years now. It's a wonderfully rewarding ministry, rich in opportunity for relationships and for meditation on our charism and spirit. During meditation I have come to new realizations about community, living in community, and skills for community. Although this article is based on experience with communities of women religious, its points are applicable to communities of men as well.

Even as recently as ten years ago, vocation directors looked at an applicant's skills for living in community—for living in a group of, say, three to eight other religious. Skills for living in community are fairly well documented: we seek an applicant who can name her own preferences and truth, who can also accommodate these to the preferences of others, who can affirm and agree and contribute and take her place in the life of the group. We look for skills in (or for potential for developing skills in) facing conflict, faith sharing, hospitality and welcome, and deepening relationships.

All those skills are treasures indeed; may we continue to seek them and to develop them in ourselves. But a realization dawns as I page through our province directory or interact with other vocation directors on a regular basis: skills for living well in a group are no longer sufficient for religious life as it is

playing itself out in this decade. More and more religious, women and men, are living with one other person or singly. There are dozens of reasons for this movement—the demands of ministry, the need for solitude, the absence of others in the area, commitment to a personal agenda—and the evidence is not yet in on whether this trend is inevitable or even healthy. What the trend does tell me, though, is that the skills vocation directors have sought will not be adequate. We need a new set of expectations and a new set of questions.

In any group, individuals are called to exercise both active and passive skills. I need to initiate ideas and activities, and I need as well to affirm and go along with the ideas and activities of others. A group is enriched when the members are able to be followers as well as leaders; in an ideal situation, each member takes a turn at leading and following.

## NETWORKING IS ESSENTIAL

What about the person who lives singly? What skills does she need? Obviously, such a person needs an ability to sustain solitude; she needs to like her own company. She needs to be able to amuse herself and to care for herself. These skills are necessary for anyone who lives alone. What if the person who lives



singly is a member of a religious community? Here is where additional skills come in. If a person is to live alone, or with one other person, as a member of a community, she needs networking skills.

*Networking* is one of the buzzwords of the 1990s. It is also a very real need if we are ever to come to true collaboration. Networking is, for my purposes here, the ability to find and make connections. Networking means I cannot wait for community (or "the community"—that vague "they," as in "they want us to . . .") to find me. I need to make a concerted effort to find and make community, using far more active than passive skills.

Networkers reach out to contact others. They use the telephone or e-mail or fax. They put effort into reaching out, even when they are tired. They have start-up energy.

Networkers initiate. They dream up and articulate ideas and invite others to modify the ideas and get in on the action. They say "what if" and "what about" and "suppose" and "I've been thinking." They also say "I'd be willing to . . ." and mean it.

Networkers find connections and then put energy into making the connections real. Networkers suggest, "Maybe every Tuesday we could . . ." or "I'm inviting all the persons who minister with the elderly" or "Who will host the gathering next time?" In one of our provinces, ten or twelve sisters who live singly in the same large city gather regularly for supper and sharing of the heart. They call themselves "The Home-Aloners." They rely on one another for support, for simple things such as airport pickups, and for discussion of community issues. These gatherings are a priority for each one in the group. This networking developed after one of their number initiated the movement.

The best networkers I have observed are inclined naturally in this direction. They are creative, and they value relationships sufficiently to work at sustaining them. They like people, and they treasure the meeting of minds and spirits. They would probably be networkers even if they were not members of a community.

In a community, these natural networkers are a gift. They are the animators and the dreamers. They are usually lots of fun. People look to them for ideas about celebrating, vacationing, beginning projects, observing anniversaries, redesigning, or renovating. Sometimes they have more ideas than the group wants or needs; ordinarily the group, if it is a healthy community, will let them know if or when they are moving toward too much control.

If networking is a gift, it is also, at least to some degree, a learnable skill. Reaching out, making contacts, keeping in touch, establishing connections, and

initiating are all active community skills. I may or may not be inclined in this direction, but I can develop these skills just as I can develop social skills, conflict resolution skills, or administrative skills. I may never be outstanding at any of these skills, but I can come to a functional level with most of them.

I have a hunch that as more and more of us have come to live alone or in twos, we have placed heavy expectations on our communities to network with us. I've been with more than thirty communities of women religious in the past few years, and I hear over and over, "The community should," "I need to be supported," "The sisters need to be told," and a variety of other claims. I believe that these statements are basically true. As communities change their configurations and living patterns, people in leadership need to put very real energy into exploring their ways of staying in touch. But the individual needs to do the same thing. The individual needs to develop and strengthen her networking skills.

## COMMUNITY WON'T JUST HAPPEN

As a vocation director, I've recently been asking the women I interview such questions as these: Can you tell me anything about a project you have initiated and followed through to completion? Do you have friends who live at a distance, and how do you keep in touch with them? Do you interact with others who have jobs similar to yours, and how do these meetings enrich you? How are you connected with family members who are scattered around the country? What ideas have you had, and how have you communicated these to others? What ideas and dreams are you willing to bring to this community? If you had lots of money and support to begin a project that would help other people, what project would you start? In short, how do you connect? How willing are you to create community?

Most vocation directors agree that the candidates we interview are searching for community. They may already have a rich and mature faith life, and the best of them are already committed to ministry. They seek community. I need to search out their capacity for creating it in nontraditional ways.

The questions I'm now asking are not the ones the more traditional guides for vocation assessment suggest. I have come to believe, however, that unless I look for networking skills and encourage (read "prod") individuals to develop them, community life will gradually diminish to the point that we simply wait for others to reach out to us. We need to do our own connecting, our own initiating, our own reaching out. It takes energy. It is much easier to stagnate in front of the television than to pick up the phone and



invite someone over. It's easier to go the Lone Ranger route than to set up a gathering of folks, particularly when some of them probably don't want to be gathered. It's easier to bemoan our diminishing energy ("The sisters are tired" has to be the all-time downer) than to make efforts to connect.

It also might be easier to let community die than to allocate some primary energy—not leftover energy—to making it the gospel witness we profess it to be. But I believe wholeheartedly, and so do the women who inspire me most, that community is a gift given us to share and spread and celebrate. Community links us with the Trinity, the primary community of loving equals in dynamic relationship. Community links us with the Acts of the Apostles, those first groups of believers sharing one heart and one soul, who gathered in one another's homes for the breaking of bread. My congregation was founded by six women who were a service community; they sought assistance from a Jesuit who helped them formalize what they had already discovered. Community is at the heart of what we profess.

If I live alone, am I still called to live community? Absolutely. I have a significant amount of power in this area. I can reach out, network, initiate, connect—or I can sit waiting for community to come to me. The choice is mine.

The motto of E. M. Forster's novel *Howards End* is "Only connect." The characters in the novel are

caught between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. They mourn the end of formal ceremony, of ritual observances, of expectations about relationships and the rhythm of life, of the traditionally structured family or community. They remember the way it used to be. Slowly, sometimes reluctantly, they learn to connect past with present, ideal with real, unexpected with familiar. They learn new ways of being in relationship with one another. Those who are able to make the connections find happiness.

Similarly, the women who are coming to our congregations in this time need to be networkers, connectors, women who can reach out from small living units and form community across the lines. Community won't "happen" for them; they will need to create it. Come to think of it, so will the rest of us as we continue this shared journey toward the "future full of hope" that God has already dreamed for our world.



Sister Katherine Hanley, C.S.J., Ph.D., is director of vocations for the Albany, New York, Province of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet.

### ***Human Sexuality Program***

*Is there someone in your seminary, religious congregation, diocese, parish, institution, or organization whose ministry would be improved through an increased understanding of human sexuality? If so, tell them about*

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*For information about the Institute, please see the back cover of this issue.*



# Spiritual Direction Today

*Paul J. Bernadicou, S.J., S.T.D.*

A recent sabbatical gave me the opportunity to peruse some favorite guides' writings on current developments in the practice of spiritual direction.

I used the 1982 book *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by William Barry and William Connolly as a baseline because it is considered by many to be the standard Catholic Christian text on the subject. Then I investigated the pertinent publications of five contemporary authors, beginning with one of the coauthors of *The Practice*, William Barry. The four others were psychiatrist Gerald May, with his similar interest in the continuing encounter between the psychological sciences and spirituality; Cistercian monk Thomas Keating, with his focus on the apophatic, contemplative tradition; Jesuit theologian William Johnston, with his ongoing Christian-Asian dialogue on mystical theology; and professor/theologian Denise Carmody, for her informed view of feminist perspectives.

In *The Practice*, Barry and Connolly think of the work of spiritual direction as helping people to develop their relationship with God. Enlightened in thought and practice by modern psychotherapy, the authors draw clarifying distinctions between psychological counseling and spiritual direction. Their insights are based on their long experience at the Center for Religious Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts,

where they have trained spiritual directors through actual and carefully supervised practice.

Barry and Connolly more fully define Christian spiritual direction as "help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship." Clearly, the focus is on experience, not on concepts or ideas. It presupposes that God acts in our lives and our world in such a way that we can really experience this action. "Moreover, this experience is viewed not as an isolated event," Barry and Connolly write, "but as an expression of the ongoing personal relationship God has established with each one of us."

## THEOLOGY IS EXPLORED

Ten years later, in 1992, William Barry published *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry*, in which he explores the underlying theological presuppositions of *The Practice*. He employs philosophical insights into how we know from the personalist philosopher John Macmurray in an attempt to illuminate such issues as "the experience of God, the problem of evil, the way God acts in



the world, what God's intention for the universe is, the meaning of the Kingdom of God, [and] the discernment of spirits."

In *Spiritual Direction*, Barry admits that although reviews of *The Practice* were generally favorable, two criticisms were particularly compelling and required a fuller theological response. First, the book focused too narrowly on prayer experiences in the conversations between director and directee. Second, the practice of spiritual direction as described needed deeper theological grounding, especially with reference to its trinitarian and ecclesial underpinnings.

The very topic of what is meant by experience can be problematic for the contemporary critical mind. Can we really claim to experience God, if there is a God, in this world? Spiritual direction as described by Barry and Connolly builds on the Christian premise that we do indeed encounter God as revealed in Jesus Christ. What does this mean experientially? Barry tries to show how this Christian conviction responds to a science-biased world that is skeptical regarding what we can decipher about our experience and about the reality of God. He also insists that spiritual guidance must move beyond the inequities that individualistic and elitist direction can breed, and that it must function within an enlightened church that today calls for a faith and spirituality committed to justice and to an interdependent search for global community.

In the 1994 Warren Lecture in Catholic Studies at Tulsa University, Barry reinforced his conviction that the tradition of spiritual direction, "which believes that God is encountered in experience and that God's desires for us can be discerned in experience, had been lost." But, he said, "In the past twenty-five years this tradition has been recovered. God is met in experience. God desires a personal relationship with each person, and as a result, each person has a deep desire for a personal relationship with God." Because this relationship is both mutual and dialogical, it can be very helpful if the person can articulate this encounter to a guide or companion who, as an active listener, is able to help that individual discern what it indicates for the direction of his or her life choices and closer union with God.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH PSYCHIATRY

Gerald May elucidates what psychiatry and spiritual direction have in common, how they complement one another, and how they differ in his *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction*. "Although secular psychology addresses a great deal about how we come to be the way we are and how we might live more efficiently, it can offer nothing in terms of why we exist or how we should

use our lives," writes May in this discussion of the nature of contemporary spiritual guidance and its relationship to counseling and psychiatry.

In *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, May argues that any attempt to integrate psychology and spirituality within a framework in which psychology has the upper hand is doomed to ego-centered distortion and unwanted willfulness. "It is my hope that things might work out better if the situation were somewhat reversed," he writes. "I would not, of course, advocate a denial of the practical value of psychological understandings or a return to a purely spiritualistic or moralistic view of human experience. But psychology, by its nature, is simply not big enough to include or even adequately address our deepest spiritual longings."

May thinks that spirituality has the capacity to incorporate psychology in a way that integrates the two in a more appropriate relationship. "If we as individuals could relinquish our attachment to self-supremacy and open our hearts to the awesome simplicity of spiritual truth," he contends, "all of our endeavors, including the giving and receiving of psychological help and understanding, could be deeply spiritual acts." We must reverse the hierarchy and so recover the possibility of seeing psychological experiences with spiritual eyes in what promises to be a more holistic and comprehensive human experience.

In May's view, psychology and religion cannot integrate as equals. "Psychology can in no way address this kind of quest without reducing it to some theory of personal need-meeting that at last must be considered narcissistic," he writes. "It is only religion—if religion only will—that can speak to the immensity of such longing and the depth of its ramifications."

Not that it is an easy path in any religion. Loneliness is inevitable because each search is personal and consequently unique: "At the deeper levels of our hearts we are all aching, for each other and for the same eternally loving One who calls us."

May further elaborates these insights in his *Addiction and Grace*, with specific reference to how the struggles we undergo with our addictions can become a blessed pain. "To be deprived of a simple object of attachment is to taste the deep, holy deprivation of our souls," he writes. "To struggle to transcend any idol is to touch the sacred hunger God has given us." In this context our asceticism becomes an act of love, no longer simply a way of dealing with attachment: "It is a willing, wanting, aching venture into the desert of our nature, loving the emptiness of that desert because of the sure knowledge that God's rain will fall and the certainty that we are both heirs and cocreators of the wonder that is now and of the Eden that is yet to be."



In his 1994 book *Intimacy with God*, Thomas Keating, whose focus is on centering prayer as a means to contemplative growth, appreciates May's helpful distinction between psychological counseling, pastoral counseling, and spiritual direction. Yet Keating recognizes that the direction of contemplatives requires some psychological sensitivities: "One of these is a particular alertness to maintaining a balance of inner and outer activities. A purely apophatic prayer may stagnate without some conceptual input through spiritual reading, liturgy, or listening to sermons or lectures that speak to the contemplative person's state of prayer." The need is for balance in the affective, intellectual, and spiritual elements of the contemplative life, so that one's prayer may be holistic and encompass a fullness of intimacy with God.

Another sensitivity pertains to rightly informed listening and support at the various stages of the contemplative life. For instance, a director must be able to distinguish between clinical malaise and the depression that is the dark night. Typically, the person in the dark night has an intuition that he or she is experiencing a purification that is leading into light: "One perceives at times the fruits of the dark night in one's changing perspectives, such as the growth of a nonjudgmental attitude towards everyone, greater detachment from things and persons, humility, and trust in God."

To develop these sensitivities, a spiritual director must be aware of the dynamics of his or her own encounter with God. Respect for the spiritual integrity of the directee should evolve from the director's own mature self-respect and the adamant assurance that the directee is always free to leave the relationship. "The deeper our experience of the path, the more we will be able to support others on theirs," Keating maintains.

He suggests astute spiritual counsel for the beginner, the growingly proficient, and the more advanced. An experienced director can give enormous encouragement and reassurance by validating the seeker's search for God at each stage from the director's own reflective traversing of a similar path. "The best direction," according to Keating, "aims at enabling or empowering the directee to graduate to the more refined and delicate guidance of the Spirit in all matters. The director becomes a fellow traveler and friend on the journey, and the directee and director speak the truth to each other in love. Speaking just the truth can be too harsh. Speaking the truth in love is mutually sustaining."

William Johnston's *Mystical Theology: The Science of Love* witnesses to a renewed interest in mysticism on the brink of the twenty-first century. "Academic studies of mystics East and West appear in great numbers," he writes, "as perceptive scholars realize that mysticism is one of the most important religious experiences in human life." What impresses Johnston are the number of modern people who are practicing meditation and who are opening themselves to those deeper states of consciousness which we call mystical. Whether using a mantra, savoring a scripture text, or sitting quietly in an awareness of their breathing, "they feel drawn beyond thinking and reasoning to a unitive consciousness wherein they rest silently in the presence of the great mystery that envelops the whole universe."

All the great mystical traditions make clear that those who embark on such a journey are in need of guidance and help. The path is notoriously perilous: one can easily stray into illusionary byways through unexamined egocentricity or get battered by storms of self-doubt and dark despair.

Johnston believes that the time is ripe for a rewriting of mystical theology so that it can be a guide and support for new entrants on the mystical path. Older manuals and guides were written almost exclusively for monks and nuns, not for married or single laypeople, who today look for intimacy with God in the midst of their secular occupations. "A renewed mystical theology must ask about the role of the living flame of love in the secular activity of such people," he says. Johnston believes that we must today clarify the positive role of marriage and sexuality in the mystical life, and he briefly but insightfully broaches the topics himself.

Asian religions pose another challenge and opportunity for a new mystical theology. Dialogues among Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity demand a language that is strongly experiential, "a mystical theology created by people who, having lived the death and resurrection of Jesus, experience the burning love of the Holy Spirit." As Johnston observes, Asian meditation is also holistic; it emphasizes the role of the body "and teaches how to sit, how to breathe, how to eat, how to fast, how to sleep, how to watch and how to relax." The body must enter the discussion of a mystical theology for today.

## IMPLICATIONS OF FEMINISM

Denise Carmody is a self-styled moderate Christian feminist; that is, while espousing feminist concerns for reform, she gives prior allegiance to her Christian



confession that “Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ of God, the uniquely authenticated spokesman and ‘bringer of salvation’” (*Christian Feminist Theology*). In her usage, “the adjective ‘feminist’ applies to what follows from a thoroughgoing commitment to realizing the full equality of women with men in the possession and exercise of human nature, human dignity.” Familiar with the range of feminist thought in and out of the church, Carmody articulates a systematic and constructive Christian approach.

She most explicitly spells out the implications for spiritual direction in a chapter entitled “Practice: Ethics and Spirituality.” In her opinion, “assuming a good formation in Christian faith [and] basic doctrine, those trying to educate Christian feminists to a mature imitation of Jesus do well to concentrate on spirituality and social justice.” These two areas are the testing ground for the twofold commandment of love that Jesus makes the essence of his religious instruction for his followers. What is demanded is a change of heart and mind (*metanoia*; see Mark 1:14)—the repentance and faith in the Good News that Jesus preaches when he commences his mission.

“Taking to heart the good news of the dawning of the reign of God requires a shift from worldly values that makes it possible to follow Jesus in living eccentrically, outside of one’s self, with God, in love, for service,” Carmody writes. Jesus is a role model because of his loving concern for human need. His teaching and his action, his word and his deed are centered on God’s loving compassion for suffering humanity. His compelling passion is to fulfill the loving will of his heavenly Father—and through parable and example, he teaches his followers to do the same. In Carmody’s words, “If people will not believe what he says, let them believe his works. His works demonstrate the power of God flowing through him. They show the advent of salvation, radical healing, in his contemporaries’ midst.”

With conversion comes a radical shift in one’s center of gravity. No longer is the self the hub and center of one’s values and concerns. A new configuration begins to take shape. Conversion—there in germ from the beginning of one’s *metanoia*—gradually puts one’s discipleship and intimacy with Jesus at the center of one’s life and actions. Now, as Carmody puts it, one’s horizon “stretches endlessly into the heaven of God.”

The disciple’s mission is to transform this world into a closer approximation of God’s kingdom of *shalom* for all, and this is where Christian feminism finds its purpose. Carmody explains three “venerable maxims” to guide feminists in promulgating the constructive discussion and the resultant reform that the church’s own conversion will entail: in the essence of the faith, unity (*In necessariis unitas*); in doubtful

matters, freedom (*In dubiis libertas*); and in all matters, charity (*Et in omnibus caritas*). Pope John XXIII, she notes, wonderfully exemplified this style of peaceful and open dialogue with “good humor and warmth toward all.”

Carmody thinks that these three maxims suggest a properly and actively feminist approach. “Too often,” she contends, “women have been held to standards of thought and conduct based more on patriarchal conventions than anything essential to the gospel or required by the creeds. Too often social justice has not come to term, has been aborted in the womb, because women have not been as free to exercise their talents, express their minds, contribute the fruits of their experience, as men.” When women are not as free as men to give their input to our human enterprises, humanity is less an image of the fullness of God than it is meant to be. We have not yet attained the full liberty of the sons and daughters of God.

Each of the five authors—William Barry, Gerald May, Thomas Keating, William Johnston, and Denise Carmody—uniquely contributes to current spiritual enlightenment from the perspective of his or her interests and expertise. Still, they all reinforce and complement each other in a common commitment to a contemporary Christian conviction that “Jesus is Lord.” The rich tradition of spiritual wisdom in the church is today enhanced by their illuminating words as our journey wends its twenty-first-century way up the mountain of God.

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# Chaptered to Death

*Janet Malone, C.N.D., Ed.D.*

*A seeker went to visit the Holy One, hoping for enlightenment. The Holy One invited the seeker into her cell and offered the seeker a drink.*

*"Yes, a drink would be fine," said the seeker.*

*The Holy One poured until the seeker's glass was full and then kept pouring.*

*The seeker watched until she/he could take it no longer. "It is overfull," the seeker said. "No more will go into it."*

*"Like the glass," the Holy One said, "you are full of your own truths, ideas, and opinions. You cannot be enlightened until you first empty your glass." (Source unknown; quoted in Peacemaking: Day by Day, vol. 1, p. 106.)*

**C**ongregations are being chaptered to death. Some congregations have had a chapter every year for the last five, six, seven years—a mixture of provincial and general chapters in their myriad variations. Are the possible spaces of quiet gestation in religious congregations being filled up to the extent that no space remains for expectant emptiness, for enlightenment?

Take the reed that grows by the stream. In order to be fashioned into a flute, it must be hollowed out and notched with holes. Only with honing and pruning can it become an instrument through which music is produced.

I submit that such honing and pruning is the challenge of religious congregations regarding chapters—specifically, general chapters. Caryll Houselander describes the process in her book *The Reed of God*: "sifting and sorting out everything that is not essential and that fills up space and silence in us and . . . discovering what sort of shape this emptiness in us is. From this we shall learn what sort of purpose God has for us."

This article examines aspects of general chapters before, during, and after their occurrence. It looks at the components that appear to drain energy from religious until they feel that nothing of real importance happens at chapters. This article also reexamines the purposes of general chapters and offers some life-giving alternatives to the frequent chapters now in vogue in so many congregations.

## SO MUCH ENERGY FOR NAUGHT

One of the preparatory aspects of general chapters is provincial chapters or other formal means of electing general chapter delegates. It is becoming more common to view general chapters, which still have elected delegates, as elitist, attended by "safe" individuals who maintain the status quo. There is the sense that a subtle classism is inherent in the election of chapter delegates, and chapters have taken on the aura of special, select, and sagacious. In fact, some religious who want to distance themselves from such nuances will not let their names stand for election to chapter. Because of these variables, among others, a chapter is not seen as an ordinary event in the life of a congregation. Rather, it is seen as the domain of a select few.

A great deal of time, energy, travel, and creativity are used over the one to two years leading up to the general chapter. The personal and financial resources put forth are phenomenal, to say nothing of the time and effort invested in sending out all the paperwork involved. (Conservation of trees would not appear to be a priority, if the amount of paper used is any indication.) Meeting upon meeting is held in every corner of the congregation to read, reflect on, and explore the endless content that creeps into chapter agendas.



What comes out of chapters as decisions and enactments in booklets and leaflets seems to have little or nothing to do with the creativity, energy, and time that religious at the grassroots level put into sending off preparatory reports, summaries, and suggestions. For this reason, some conclude that what they do in preparation is ignored within chapter. In fact, so much energy can be used in preparing for chapter that religious are often too exhausted, when the time comes, to tune in to what is happening at the actual chapter and what is supposed to happen after it.

Congregations are being chaptered to death, despite sincere efforts to make chapters life-giving. The stark reality for many chapters is that not much happens over the long term. Most congregations have been assiduously adapting the structures of chapters to foster more life-giving ways of being together. Still, the structures of most chapters preclude effecting anything truly fruitful.

## OUTSIDE HELP NEEDED

Most congregations see the necessity of having trained facilitators (two are usually essential) from outside the congregation, who know they can work together in a semblance of complementarity. If there will be simultaneous translation because more than one language will be spoken at the chapter, it must be clear whether the facilitators are expected to be able to speak at least two of the languages. When only one of the facilitators speaks two of the languages, the unilingual facilitator may be subtly “punished” by some of the delegates, who will ignore the unilingual person because he or she doesn’t speak their language.

If it is necessary for chapter delegates to vote their approval of the facilitators before they can work with the group, this must be done before the actual chapter begins. Such a step is out of place within the actual chapter proceedings, where facilitators may get only nominal approval from a number of the delegates. Nominal approval can affect the confidence the whole group places in the facilitators. Some congregations have lost precious energy by having the chapter delegates vote their approval of the facilitators after the chapter has officially started.

The challenge for the facilitators is to ensure that the structures for the gathering have a good balance of left- and right-brain rhythms. Facilitators must deal with both content and process. Chapter preparatory committees may deal with a lot of content, so process can suffer if the facilitators do not skillfully calibrate the levels of content and process, prayer, work, and relaxation. Congregations may subscribe to process on paper but sabotage it in practice.

Simplicity is critical for the chapter proceedings. Otherwise, subtle competition arises; for example, one province or group tries to outdo the other through its reports or prayer services or by having more “strong” people at the microphone. It takes intuitive facilitators who are skilled in group dynamics to deal with the ebb and flow of energy (the process, the “how”) in the group and to sense when the group is getting sidetracked by the agendas of strong personalities. Their responsibility is to ensure an impartiality so that inside interest groups don’t dominate or monopolize the proceedings. Such posturings fill up the sacred space, the emptiness, needed for metanoia.

Facilitators must be attuned to the emotional energy in the group and ensure that time is taken to process the different emotions that may be driving the content direction of the chapter. If emotions are not attended to in a nonthreatening and sensitive way, chapters can become very “heady,” leading to too many chapter decisions or enactments, which can paralyze the congregation.

Facilitators must use not only their expertise in adult learning but also their compassion and intuition to help the chapter delegates negotiate the crises inherent in change in the life of the group. It is important to see crisis from an Eastern perspective, as both “danger” and “hidden opportunity.” The facilitators must respect people’s desire to resist danger and, at the same time, keep the sacred energy flowing toward the emptiness of hidden opportunity.

Chapters are about change, and many people, if not most, fear change. As a result of this fear, interest groups in the chapter may move into total left-brain functioning. This is one of the main problems facilitators have to face, and if they tend to be more left-brain functioning themselves, that can prevent attainment of the emptiness necessary for life-giving energy.

As William F. Hogan notes in an article in *Review for Religious* (January/February 1989), the whole chapter can degenerate if delegates get bogged down on “every element of the life of the congregation,” with committees for definitions, for canon law matters, and for constitutional matters. Delegates fixate on left-brain definition denotations, to the detriment of the right-brain connotations integral to lived experiences. Fear can result in a rigidity that maintains the ways of the majority and excludes other ethnic, cultural, racial, and national experiences. The minorities in such chapters may not voice the oppression they are experiencing; they may endure the violations, knowing that what is being decided will not be life-giving in their particular culture, language, or ministry situation. Frag-



mentation of the congregation results because diversity, coresponsibility, and subsidiarity have not been respected.

Some congregations have been in one type of chapter or another for the past six or seven years. With all the time, energy, and resources spent preparing for and attending such marathons, at the end of the day, within the present format, there are still comments like the following:

Frequently religious speak of the amount of energy that is expended in preparing chapters and implementing their decisions and orientations; also of the insufficiency of time between chapters . . . [and] fatigue over the number of meetings. (Hogan, *Review for Religious*, January/February 1989)

Imagine a fictitious . . . chapter meeting. The agenda triggers a sense of déjà vu. . . . Not much happens. . . . Instead, such action/inaction significantly enervates people and leads to communal demoralization, trivial preoccupations, and diminished corporate initiative. . . . Many seek distance from these unnamed dynamics which sap energy and creativity. (Theresa M. Monroe, *Review for Religious*, May/June 1992)

And nothing changes. . . . An autopsy . . . could read: death by a lethal injection of stylized ideological conversation that dissolves into vagueness; or faulty diagnosis of underlying causes; or failure to design and use structures that could adequately exercise the corporate organism and its members. (Munroe, *ibid.*)

## TOO MANY WORDS

Some religious purport that chapter enactments, decisions, or directions don't affect the congregation at large. They avow that the real changes in religious life happen at the grass roots, from lived needs and experiences—not from wordy, heady, left-brain decrees issued by a select few.

The postchapter experience is different for the chapter delegates than it is for the grassroots religious who were not part of the chapter. Some delegates may have had a bonding and conversion experience, but how does this get translated for people who were not there? The written documents can pale in comparison to the actual experience. For other delegates, the sheer exhaustion of the experience precludes, or at least dampens, any enthusiasm for the chapter enactments in their written, stylized format.

As noted earlier, the group dynamics of any gathering consist of both content and process. It is difficult to convey the nuances of process to anybody who has not experienced it. Thus, what comes out in written form, postchapter, for the total congregation deals with the content, the decisions, the recommendations, the enactments. In many instances, because so

much time was spent in the chapter assembly ensuring that all the *t*'s were crossed and all the *i*'s were dotted, the end result is that the modicum of "heart" that might have shone through the many words has been wrung out. Also, when there are too many decisions or propositions (the maximum for group dynamics would be about five), they are not even read. I know of one congregation whose chapter delegates issued a hundred propositions.

In addition, there may be no real energy left for postchapter follow-up because of the amount of time, energy, and creativity spent preparing for and participating in the chapter itself. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the same content continues to reappear at each general chapter. When the words stay on the pages of chapter documents and are not integrated into the daily lives of religious, nothing changes.

Another point to reflect on is that real change happens at the level where ministry enfleshes mission. Real change, then, is not top-down but bottom-up. The challenge for general chapters is to facilitate this natural occurrence.

## PURPOSES OF GENERAL CHAPTERS

Having explored some of the structural aspects that contribute to congregations' feeling chaptered to death, let us consider what canon law and the constitutions of congregations can offer to enlighten this concern. Each congregation stipulates in its constitution the purposes of a general chapter, including renewal of religious life, structures, and ways of being and doing in the congregation, as well as the election of new leadership. Such purposes are variants of what is noted in canons 631–33 in the *Code of Canon Law*.

The one purpose of general chapters that is similar in many constitutions is cited in canon 631, 1: the election of a supreme moderator. Congregations hold general chapters for the election of their congregation leader. (I think the time of maturity has come for congregations to move from the election of their leaders to a total discernment process for choosing their leaders, but that topic is beyond the scope of this article.) In fact, at least one congregation/society I know holds a general chapter for that sole purpose. This means that the other aspects of the life of the congregation are dealt with elsewhere.

Can the issues now addressed in general chapters under the heading "congregation affairs" or "congregation issues" be dealt with in another, more inclusive and creative kind of forum? Can they also be handled in a way that "represents the whole institute and becomes a true sign of its unity in charity" (canon 631, 1)?



At the October 1995 annual meeting of the English Canadian major superiors of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), I explored, in one of the sessions I had with them, the question of the purposes of general chapters. Their comments, based on their own constitutions and lived experiences, are synthesized in what follows. A general chapter can be viewed as an ecclesial event, a time of celebration and bonding, a gift to the church. It is the context for choosing congregation leaders. It can be seen as the ultimate policy-making, decision-making body, in which the mission of the congregation is evaluated and a vision for the future is articulated. It can be an experience of power sharing, of collaborative ownership and commitment. It can be a time for personal and communal conversion or an occasion to bond with associates. Finally, a general chapter can be just an ordinary event in the life of the congregation.

## LIFE-GIVING ALTERNATIVES

Perhaps, by exploring what would make a congregational chapter an ordinary event, we can find life-giving alternatives to the present general chapters. What does it take to invite congregations to explore such alternatives? The answer would appear to lie in gentle persuasion rather than dictates—perhaps in exploring the notions of coresponsibility and subsidiarity.

What might convince congregations to move to more life-giving ways of being together? Perhaps one of Aesop's fables, "The Gentle Art of Persuasion," can help contextualize this challenge:

The north wind and the sun were disputing which was the more effective, and agreed to acknowledge as the more effective whichever of them could strip a traveller of his clothing. The wind tried first, but its violent gusts only made the person hold his clothes tightly. When it blew harder still, the cold made the person so uncomfortable that he added an extra wrap. Eventually the wind got tired of it and handed the person over to the sun.

The sun shone first with a moderate warmth which made the person strip off his top layer. Then it blazed till, unable to stand the heat, the person stripped and went to bathe in a nearby river.

*Coresponsibility* and *subsidiarity* are words common in most congregations. Perhaps the crux of life-giving alternatives to present chapters lies in taking these words off the pages of congregation documents and enfleshing them. Coresponsibility would then mean that power would be more "power with" and circular, so that the responsibility for the congregation becomes everyone's according to his or her mandated roles. Concomitant with coresponsibility is

subsidiarity, which means that decisions are made at the level at which they will be carried out.

In my work with the UISG, some suggestions for life-giving alternatives emerged:

- 1) An annual convention or gathering to deal with issues of importance in each province/region/cluster. Such a gathering would be open to all members and associates. Interest in and love of the congregation, as well as a commitment to attending the whole gathering, would be the requisites.
- 2) General chapters held in area chapter gatherings or assemblies, with results communicated to the whole congregation. These chapters would also be open to all.
- 3) "Town hall" gatherings, held on a regular basis, at which religious and their associates could come together to reflect on burning issues affecting the life and mission of the congregation.
- 4) Different workshops, retreats, study days and profession anniversaries offered across the congregation, giving members opportunities to get to know each other in settings that are more open than the formal chapter context.

## OPEN SPACE PRINCIPLES

As congregations learn to see general chapters as ordinary events in their communities, with the definite purpose of choosing leadership, then more and more space becomes available for the creative emptiness that is critical to the mission and its enfleshment in various ministries. Perhaps the "Four Principles of Open Space" that Harrison Owen describes in his book *Open Space Technology* could help us explore some of these general chapter alternatives creatively:

- 1) Whoever comes is the right people.
- 2) Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
- 3) Whenever it starts is the right time.
- 4) Whenever it is over, it is over.

In addition, Owen's "law of two feet" could certainly help focus a group when its energy is being sapped: "If during the course of the gathering any person finds him or herself in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they can use their two feet and go to some productive place."

Perhaps congregations need to focus on the why of general chapters in order to determine their frequency. There would appear to be a trend to shorten rather than lengthen the time between chapters. Formerly, many general chapters took place every six years; now the average is about four years, which



puts more wear and tear on congregations. What would happen if general chapters occurred only when it was time to choose congregation leadership? And what would happen if all the concerns and directions of the congregation were dealt with in a forum to be worked out within the contexts of coresponsibility and subsidiarity? Why not use a more cooperative, inductive approach, since the present top-down format doesn't touch in depth the daily lives of most congregation members?

If these premises could be applied to the content issues of most general chapters, area chapter assemblies would replace the present general chapters. Within the contexts of coresponsibility and subsidiarity, these assemblies would be characterized by openness and egalitarianism; everyone and anyone with the passion, the commitment, and the time for the total assembly could participate.

Unlike the more structured, rigid, hierarchical chapters of the present, these area chapter assemblies would rely on processes emphasizing lateral creative energy. They could be modeled on open-space gatherings; the participants would, in an unstructured but very purposeful way, be creative about the agenda, using the principles of open space noted earlier.

Open-space gatherings have worked successfully with large groups (i.e., about 300 to 400 people). With the help of skilled but unobtrusive facilitators, participants using the bulletin-board technique post the topics they think are pertinent to the life and mission of the congregation now and for the proximate future. Groups gather, according to their interests, to flesh out their concerns, ideas, and dreams, which are summarized in point form by a scribe and later shared with the whole assembly.

In like manner, these summaries are shared with the total congregation after all the area chapter assemblies have taken place. This means that the whole congregation knows what's happening in other parts of the congregation. The patterns of convergence specific to the total congregation culture, charism, and mission, and the patterns of divergence specific to the different ethnic groups, nationalities, and milieus in which the congregation lives and ministers, can be readily seen.

For those who have experienced area chapter assemblies using the open-space format, it seems remarkable that the summaries of these gatherings are so similar—yet it is not surprising in a group with the same corporate culture. The differences and divergences relate, for the most part, to the specifics of the various milieus. Within the principles of coresponsibility and subsidiarity, the decisions arising from such gatherings have been made at the grass roots for each area, so they have a better chance of being enfolded in the daily lives of the members.

This is not a license for everyone in different parts of the congregation to do his or her own thing, irrespective of the whole. On the contrary, the many issues now draining the life out of general chapters could be dealt with in a more grassroots way within each of the respective areas, and the conclusions could be shared with the congregation at large. The gospel directive of charity and constitutional adages about unity and charity in diversity would be the paramount guidelines.

## TIME RIPE FOR CHANGE

Congregations have been making every effort to ease the burden that general chapters have become. A few tentative steps have been taken within the present structures. But the reality remains that congregations are being chaptered to death, and as far as the grass roots are concerned, nothing life-giving or long-term appears to come out of general chapters. Something new is needed—something more egalitarian, mutual, unstructured, creative.

This article has invited the creation of a sacred space, a sacred emptiness, in order for the Spirit to work among us. It would appear that putting new wine in old wineskins is not the answer. Can we let go of what we've known and risk moving into the unknown as explored here? The admonishing yet encouraging words of Isaiah 43:18–19 invite us, persuade us to create that sacred space for the new: "Remember not the events of the past; the things of long ago consider not. See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers."

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# Menopausal Anger

*Maureen Sinnott, O.S.F., Ph.D.*

**S**everal years ago, I studied the differences in dream content among forty-eight Roman Catholic women religious and forty-five Roman Catholic married women between the ages of 45 and 55, during their menopause. In all, I studied 952 dreams and written associations qualitatively in order to develop a thorough knowledge of their content and to facilitate interpretation by gleaning their patterns and differences. I performed quantitative statistical analysis on 372 of the dreams, using the system outlined by Hall and Van de Castle in their book *The Content Analysis of Dreams*. The data obtained from the subjects through a comprehensive biographical questionnaire (covering history of verbal, physical, and/or sexual abuse, rape and/or attempted rape, menopausal and sexual history, duration of psychotherapy, spiritual practices, and current stressors) were utilized to further clarify the qualitative analysis of the dreams.

Many significant differences were found between the dream content of women religious and that of married women. This article focuses on the finding that significantly more women religious dreamed about a character attempting or threatening to assault another character with a weapon. The following dreams were reported by two women religious:

I think we were going to have mass, and the priest brought in another priest who had had a stroke. He brought him from his bedroom, perhaps. He had his arms around the man's chest and was trying to seat the man in a chair in the sanctuary. He had a little difficulty because the chair was too far to one side. I went up to help move the chair. There was another man whose left foot was a wooden stump about three to four inches in diameter, with an electrical cord coming out of it. He could start bombs with his foot, and he did. He was not a good man. I had been around when he used his foot to blow up something.

Someone was coming through a crawl space to our locker room and then to other places. The person was trying to kill people, either team members or other people. One time it backfired, and someone really did get killed, not just threatened. Their face and head had been injured in a most painful way. I was talking to a well-known citizen—seemed like Ross Perot. He was a citizen-investigator. He was going to try to duplicate the crime to find out who did it. I had made a tape that would warn anyone who entered the crawl space to go back. Once they turned the corner, something like a cannonball would go off, and their head would be crushed. I had set up the cannonball. Someone—maybe a reporter—asked, didn't I feel bad knowing someone might take the dare and get killed. I said, "No, all this killing has got to stop." I thought, since the citizen-investigator is going to enter, knowing the risks,



maybe he's the one who actually committed the crimes he investigated.

## SEARCHING FOR EXPLANATION

Why would significantly more women religious than married women dream about people being threatened or assaulted with a weapon? One of my first assumptions was that it might be because more women religious (42 percent) than married women (31 percent) reported a history of sexual abuse. But only 30 percent of those reporting dreams with aggressive content also reported having been sexually abused. Another assumption I made was that the aggressive dream content was related to depression. Some research has indicated a lower rate of depression during menopausal transition among women who have never married, but that was not confirmed by this sample. Although no significant difference was found between women religious and married women in terms of increase in depression during menopause, fourteen women religious (29 percent) and seven married women (16 percent) did report an increase in depression. However, only four (29 percent) of the fourteen women religious who reported an increase in depression had dreamed about a character threatening or assaulting another character with a weapon. Indeed, the significant difference between groups was not related to menopausal status at all; no significant difference was found between married women and women religious who were premenopausal, menopausal, or postmenopausal.

Significantly more women religious than married women in the total sample had experienced a major change in employment or residence or had become separated from a close friend within the previous two years. Of the women with aggressive dream content, 80 percent had experienced one of those major changes; 70 percent felt only somewhat, slightly, or not at all affirmed as women in the Roman Catholic church; and 50 percent had regrets about never having had children.

## ANGER APPEARS INVOLVED

The results of my research suggest several theories as to why significantly more women religious than married women had dreams with aggressive content. Such dreams may be expressions of (1) repressed anger, associated with separation from family and friends as an adolescent entering religious life, which is reactivated by major changes in employment or residence or by separation from close friends during menopausal transition; (2) repressed anger attributable to the development of a severe superego through pre-Vatican II religious formation, which inhibited even the verbal expression of anger; (3) self-punishment because of the erroneous assumption of guilt and shame about angry feelings; (4) repressed anger accumulated during years of overidentification with the "good nun" persona; (5) repressed anger associated with feelings of regret about having sacrificed child-bearing potential, now that alternatives are no longer conceivable; and/or (6) repressed anger associated with lifelong commitment to serving a church that is perceived to be only somewhat, slightly, or not at all affirming of the gifts of women.

Dream recording and exploration may be a valuable tool for identifying unresolved anger in women religious, especially during menopausal transition. Spiritual directors and therapists need to be aware of some of the possible sources of anger in women religious so that they can help them identify and work through their anger.



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# The Step into Immortality

*Francis J. Buckley, S.J., S.T.D.*

**F**orrest Langlinais's child, born only two months before, slips from his grasp into the floodwaters of Texas and disappears. Dr. Jack Kevorkian, also known as "Dr. Death," helps yet another sick person put an end to a painful life. A photographer wins a Pulitzer prize for a picture of a dying girl, huddled and hopeless, being approached by a vulture. A plane drops out of the sky, and all 127 passengers die. A Hamas terrorist destroys himself and 21 other riders on a bus in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Newspapers, radio, television, and our own daily experience continually remind us of the fragility of life and the nearness of death. Because we die, because life as we know it comes to an end, we ask some deadly serious questions: Why am I here? Where am I going? Why live? Why die? Why me? Why now?

Human beings in every culture have always asked these questions. They have not always agreed on the answers. Some people believe that we are born by chance, die by chance, and live in an absurd, meaningless world. Others believe that all is determined by fate: birth, death, and all the events of life are fixed beforehand, and we play out our role in a drama beyond our control.

The Hebrew scriptures, radiant with faith in Yahweh, reflect ambiguity about death. It is bitter for those to whom life is sweet, like King Hezekiah. "In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, 'Thus says Yahweh: "Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover."' Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to Yahweh: 'Remember now, Yahweh, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.' Hezekiah wept bitterly" (2 Kings 20:1-3). But death is sweet for those like Job, to whom life is bitter. In his trials Job prayed, "I would choose strangling and death rather than this body" (Job 7:13-15).

Life seems fragile and fleeting, like a shadow or a sigh. Death is an enemy, swallowing everyone like a grave, a gaping hole, a place of silence and darkness given over to vermin and dust. After the period of mourning by those left behind, the dead are out of sight, out of mind, forgotten by all.

The second creation account in Genesis 2-3 presents death as a punishment for sin, which entered the world through the envy of the devil (Wis. 2:23-24). Thus, death symbolizes sin, manifesting its presence and effects, and executing divine retribution. Yet even the innocent die. Why? Particularly after the exile, the Jewish authors presented the question in Qoheleth 2:16, 7:15, and 8:12-14; Job 9:22-23; and Psalms 39:6 and 49:10. They had no definitive answer. The suffering servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 53:8-12 saves others by his death; so do the prophets and the Maccabean martyrs, by witnessing to Yahweh before an unjust death. But this hardly explains death by accident or sickness.

The more acutely the problem of the death of the innocent and the prosperity of the wicked was felt, the more readily the people of Israel became open to see the need for a judgment after death so that God's justice would prevail. Isaiah had prepared them with his words, "Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead. . . . For Yahweh comes out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no longer cover its slain" (26:19-21). In exile Ezekiel gave them hope by his vision of the dead bones coming back to life (37:1-14). Ultimately, God will destroy death, punish the wicked, and raise the just to new life. Daniel gave apocalyptic expression to this conviction: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and ever-



lasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (12: 2–3). These insights were reflected in 2 Maccabees 7: 9–33 and in Wisdom 4:7 to 5:5 and 5:15–16.

## DEATH OF JESUS

In the gospels, before the actual passion and death of Jesus, death is presented as an evil—something to be endured and overcome, something from which to be delivered. Jesus feels sorry for the widow of Naim, and like Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:18–37), he restores the son to his mother (Luke 7: 11–15). He sighs and weeps for the dead Lazarus before bringing him back to life (John 11:33–43). He has no illusions that death is easy. He himself goes forth to meet death like a hero, resolutely setting his face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). He proclaims, “No one takes my life away from me; I lay it down freely” (John 10:18). Death thus becomes a sign of the depth of Christ’s courage and love: “No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

On the other hand, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus tells his closest friends that he is brokenhearted with grief. Grief and sorrow always come from losing or doing without something very precious. Clearly, human life has been valuable to Jesus. He has freely chosen to share that life with his friends. Now he can do nothing but pray.

A disaster threatens, and Jesus is deathly afraid. He is in agony, pulled apart, overwhelmed. He prays to the Father and gets no response, no thunderclap, no consolation, no sign of interest, only silence. He just gets strength to go on. He endures—an act of heroism.

But in the course of Jesus’ dying, something else emerges. Jesus’ whole life has been a preparation for the moment of death. In that death Jesus teaches us a lesson—the lesson that death is not merely a horrible end of everything, but a going forth from the pains of this life into the arms of a loving Father.

On the cross Jesus prays, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). As he has lived, so does he die. His whole life has been marked by a total abandonment to divine Providence, an entire subjection to his Father’s will. According to the letter to the Hebrews (10:5–7), on coming into the world, Jesus said, “Sacrifice and oblation of the Old Law you would not receive, but the body of a victim you have fitted to me. Behold, I come to do your will, my God.” Again and again, during his life on earth, Jesus proclaimed how much the love of his Father meant to him. When his parents found him in the Temple, he announced the priority of his Father’s will above all (Luke 2:49). He told the apostles that the very food by which he lived

was to do the will of his Father (John 4:31–34). He told the Jews that he would die freely, but only because of the will of his Father: “No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and to take it up again. I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for my sheep. Such is the command I have received from my Father” (John 10:18).

Broken and crushed in the Garden of Olives, Jesus still continued to affirm, “Father, not my will but yours be done.” Now, the will of his Father had been accomplished. He had been obedient unto death, even death on a cross. He had been the light of the world, and now his light was being dimmed in shame and suffering. He had come full of love, and the ones he loved had scourged him, crowned him with thorns, spat upon him, mocked him, nailed him to the cross, and left him to die. Human beings had treated him cruelly. Now he was free to go, free to return to the loving embrace of a Father whose affection for him would never end. With his last breath, he delivered his soul from the hands of his executioners into the hands of that loving Father: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Such self-surrender is radically different from the mindset of endurance or heroism.

Did God the Father—could he—really want Jesus to die? Clearly, God did not want people to kill Jesus, but to listen and obey. Never did God say, “This is my beloved son. Kill him.” Yet God so loved the world that he sent his only son so that we might not perish but have eternal life. God did want Jesus to do what was necessary to free human beings from sin. In a sinful world, that involved death. Why?

Every sin is a kind of idolatry in which we try to make ourselves into God, substituting our will for God’s will. Worse still, every sin is an attempt to get rid of the true God as a threat to our own willfulness. To reveal the death-dealing nature of sin, God let human beings experience the foolhardiness of such idolatry. He allowed them to suffer and die. He sent lawgivers and prophets to call his people back from sin and warn them of the consequences of sin. But God would not compel humans to obey. Forced obedience has no value in God’s eyes. When the law and prophets did not suffice, he sent his own son, hoping to turn refusal to compliance (Matt. 21:33–46). When the life and teaching of his son did not suffice, the last resort was to let the death of his son reveal, in the most dramatic way possible, the deadly nature of sin—and the overwhelming love of God, stronger than death, stronger than sin. In this way, while respecting human freedom, God fills with divine love the void left by the billions of human refusals to love.

Jesus’ mission is to reveal genuine love in a world fascinated by pseudoloves. He comes as a *go’el*, a family member responsible for getting the other fam-



ily members out of trouble. He redeems or ransoms us, doing what is necessary to touch our hearts and set us free, paying the price (Mark 10:45)—not to Satan or to some vengeful God holding us captive, but to us sinners. In this way he frees us from the slavery of sin, to which we have enslaved ourselves.

## DEATH AFTER JESUS

Christ's resurrection changed the perception of death. Knowing all the fears connected to death—our fears of loneliness, of the unknown, of annihilation, of the loss of identity, of consequences for loved ones, of failure, of punishment—Jesus entered into that emptiness to fill it with his presence. Rising from the dead, he has freed us from paralyzing fear and opened our eyes to what lies beyond. Death is now a doorway to life with Christ, who has passed through death to prepare a place for us with his Father: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2–3). Death will be a source of beatitude (Apoc. 14:13), an entry into peace (Wis. 3:3), an eternal rest, a perpetual light. We shall enter a new world: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . . [God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new'" (Apoc. 21:1–5).

Bodily death is no longer only an inevitable destiny we reluctantly accept, a condemnation rightly incurred because of our sins. We can deliberately choose to suffer and die for the Lord, just as he deliberately chose to suffer and die for us (Phil. 1:20). With Paul we can say, "In my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, the church" (Col. 1:24). A martyr's death, like that of Jesus, has the value of a sacrifice in God's eyes, consecrating, purifying, and sealing a covenant. Such a death glorifies God (John 21:19) and earns the crown of life (Apoc. 2:10, 12:11).

The same attitude is shared by Ignatius of Antioch. In his letter to the Romans, he begs them not to interfere with his death, so that he may prove to be God's sacrifice. Then he adds:

Once I have suffered, I shall become a freedman of Jesus Christ, and united with him, I shall rise a free man. . . . Of no use to me will be the farthest reaches of the universe or the kingdoms of this world. I would rather die and come to Jesus Christ than be king over

the entire earth. Him I seek who died for us; Him I love who rose again because of us. . . . Permit me to be an imitator of my suffering God. . . . My Love has been crucified, and I am not on fire with the love of earthly things. . . . Bread of God is what I desire, that is, the flesh of Jesus Christ . . . and for my drink I desire his Blood, that is incorruptible love.

To want martyrdom is understandable, perhaps. It involves a dramatic struggle with death, full of meaning and purpose. But that does not explain Paul's attitude, which is one of deep love and faith, a desire to be fully with Christ, no matter where or how. Dying, for the Christian, is a gain, because Christ is our life. Whatever our present condition, it is oppressive; thus Paul can write to the Corinthian church, "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). And he writes to the Philippians, "Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you" (Phil. 1:20–23).

In his "Sermon on Man's Mortality," Saint Cyprian of Carthage writes,

How unreasonable it is to pray that God's will be done, and then not promptly obey it when he calls us from this world! Instead we struggle and resist like self-willed slaves and are brought into the Lord's presence with sorrow and lamentation, not freely consenting to our departure, but constrained by necessity. And yet we expect to be rewarded with heavenly honors by him to whom we come against our will! Why then do we pray for the kingdom of heaven to come if this earthly bondage pleases us? . . .

We are living here now as aliens, and only for a time. . . . We look upon paradise as our country, and a great crowd of our loved ones awaits us there; a countless throng of parents, brothers, sisters, and children longs for us to join them. Assured though they are of their own salvation, they are still concerned about ours. What joy both for them and for us to see one another and embrace! O the delight of that heavenly kingdom where there is no fear of death! O the supreme and endless bliss of everlasting life!

These biblical and patristic themes have shaped the approaches to death found in the liturgy. They are echoed in the texts.

## CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIES OF DEATH

Christians today still draw strength from the death and resurrection of Jesus. Many of them long for martyrdom. Many more look forward to being with



Jesus in heaven. All of them make room for a loving Providence, which guides the details of life and invites our free response. But even Christians differ in their analysis of death.

Edward Schillebeeckx, in *The Layman in the Church*, depicts death as absurd, snatching away everything of value in this world and thus revealing the absurdity of sin, which destroys the humanity of the sinner.

For Karl Rahner, writing in *Sacramentum Mundi*, death provides a grace-filled opportunity for us to take life seriously, to choose the direction of life. Death sums up the fundamental choices we have made about ourselves and God. We die well when we surrender ourselves fully and unconditionally to God. We die badly when we close in on ourselves and shut out God, rejecting God's wise and loving gift of self.

At times Rahner seems to impose his own philosophy on the reality of dying. Few deaths can in fact be described as personal acts. Most are events far beyond the person's choice and control. But there is a grain of truth in his assertion that death is a growing up, the achievement of total self-possession. In his own way, Rahner is simply paraphrasing the traditional conviction that as we live, so shall we die. Deathbed conversions are possible; they happen. But behind them lie many other choices of good over evil, and decisions to love others, not just ourselves. Death usually seals personal choices made long before.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in her book *On Death and Dying*, referred to death as "the final stages of growth." We may not be able to control the moment of death, she says, but in the process of dying we can become all that we were meant to be. In this sense death is not an enemy but a friend, offering us an opportunity to see everything in proper perspective. Death strips away all illusions of false values. Death reveals what we can take with us and what we must leave behind. Death points to the urgency of love, the futility of fashion.

God has so designed life that eventually we learn the two key lessons: humility and love. Both of these lessons take time. We learn our limits by experiencing those limits, time after time. Our illusions fall apart. We realize that we are not God, not all-powerful, often foolish. Likewise, the true nature of love is discovered slowly, step by step. During courtship and honeymoon, love is all too often confused with infatuation. One is lost in the beloved and finds this delightful. The first bloom of sexual love is often full of self-satisfaction. The arrival of children stretches and pulls the couple's understanding of love beyond the narrow circle of two people utterly responsive to each other. People normally discover the unselfish dimensions of love through the demands their chil-

dren make on them. Then they can appreciate much more God's unconditional love for them.

Deaths that are "premature," such as those of infants or children, are a source of greater human grief because we mourn their lost opportunity to freely choose the shape and meaning of their life. Deaths that are "postponed," such as those of the sick or elderly who lose psychic awareness and responsibility, lead us to mourn not so much their death as the postponement of death—the lost opportunity to enter into the full consequences of their choices.

The death of a Christian is a dying with Christ. Jesus provided a model by dying willingly to fulfill the meaning of his life. The church now provides visible sacramental bonds between the individual's death and the death of Christ.

## SACRAMENTALITY OF DEATH

Baptism plunges us into the death and resurrection of Christ by a symbolic burial and reemergence (Rom. 6:3, Col. 2:12). Our dying to sin, ritually enacted first in baptism and celebrated again and again in the sacrament of reconciliation, is lived out day by day and finally consummated in our physical death. As an initiation into a community, baptism celebrates death to isolation and rebirth into the community of the body of Christ.

In the Eucharist we proclaim the mystery of faith. We proclaim the meaning of Jesus' death: it was not an accident. It was freely chosen. It was not just one death among billions of human deaths from the beginning to the end of time. That one death, freely chosen, the death of a man who was also God—the only such man—forever changed the meaning of human history and the meaning of death. Jesus chose to die for two reasons: to reveal the depth of God's love for us, how far God would go to show love; and to reveal the depth of sin as a refusal to respond to God's love. By dying, Jesus did all he could to touch human hearts, hardened in sin, and get us to freely renounce sin for love. In the Eucharist we do more than proclaim the fact of Christ's death. We proclaim our recognition of its meaning and our response in love. We proclaim our readiness to do the same in memory of him, to give our lives for others as he has given his life for us. We proclaim our confidence that beyond death lies risen life for Jesus and for us.

In the anointing of the sick, we remember that we are not alone in our infirmity. Christ has come to share our human weakness and set us free. In this sacrament he continues his healing ministry. The sacrament restores bodily health, or it enables us to accept the limits of human life. The church continues to restrict this sacrament to those seriously ill, for serious illness



forces us to confront our mortality more realistically: death moves from an abstract, theoretical possibility—something that will happen to us “someday”—to an imminent threat. We realize more soberly that we are indeed going to die, and that we could die soon. As we rethink the meaning of life faced by death, we are encouraged by the church to remember that Jesus overcame death not just for himself but for all of us. His passion and resurrection open new vistas. Thus, anointing heals both body and mind, alleviating the fear of death. The church, the body of Christ, gives us a sign of his presence and power. It supports us with the prayers of our brothers and sisters who are still alive. It reminds us of those who have died in the Lord and are now alive, waiting to welcome us into our heavenly home with Jesus and Mary.

Confirmation, matrimony, and ordination are more explicitly outer-directed sacraments. They, too, celebrate our death to a self-centered life and our readiness to make a commitment to others in union with the Lord, who gave himself wholeheartedly to us. The dynamics of his death transform our life. Human love itself is a kind of dying: we die to self to live for others.

The church teaches that death is a consequence of original sin. Of course, there was animal death before humans appeared. Even without sin, humans would have ended biological life in space and time and entered into a definitive relationship with God by means of a free act engaging their whole self. But death as we know it now, in darkness and weakness and obscurity about its actual nature, is the result of sin. Even those who are alive at Christ's second coming must attain eternal life by a “change” that is substantially the same as death:

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:51–57)

With death, our individual history finally ends. The conviction of the finality of this life sets Christians apart from non-Christians. The doctrine of apocatastasis (the notion that at the end of time all human beings will be in heaven, so that an eternal hell is not a real possibility) has been consistently rejected by

the church since the time of Origen. The Asian notion of transmigration of souls (reincarnation, rebirth), which is becoming popular among New Age adherents, is incompatible with the uniqueness and decisive dignity of human history and the nature of freedom as definitive choice. It trivializes human responsibility and accountability. Worse, reincarnation effectively evacuates the meaning and value of the Son of God's incarnation and redemptive death as well. If human life is part of a cycle of rebirths, the innocent Jesus could have been punished for faults in a previous life. His death then would have revealed neither the extent of God's love nor the nature of sin.

I would like to close with an account of the death of my Aunt Evelyn. She had been a supervisor for the telephone company, bustling around New York City, honored and appreciated for her skills. Then she developed arthritis. She had to retire from a very active position to a job running a switchboard. When the arthritis became so crippling that she could no longer do that, she left her family and friends to move in with my mother and father in Los Angeles. Gradually, she lost her hearing—which had been so important in her work—and then her eyesight. God was prying her fingers loose from all she held dear. Finally, she went to the hospital to die. My mother and I went to be with her, but it was a long and painful process as she gasped for air. At one point my mother remarked, “I never knew it was so hard to die.”

As we bent over her in her bed, my aunt suddenly opened her eyes, smiled, and said, “Jesus is here. I've seen heaven. It's very beautiful.” Then she died.

## RECOMMENDED READING

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# Slim Paradise

*James Torrens, S.J.*

What a narrow stretch I fill,  
an arm's length between walls;  
barely a tenor octave,  
a sliver of the band.

I'm a thermometer on foot,  
bundling up and disrobing;  
feed me a set of numbers,  
I'll get a few backward.

Sailing into an owner's manual,  
I'm beached at chapter two;  
in a yawning library,  
I snuggle on one shelf.

What a slim paradise  
is closing in.

**E**very so often we glimpse what a tiny band of reality we occupy and how little, as individuals, we count. It can happen at any age, but the later years provide a wide vista on a span of limitations. This does not seem to bother us very much. We go blithely along, functioning as we can—even though the day when we find ourselves a few inches off our own home space, we are in for a hair-raising adventure. A person with doctorate in hand may be unable to fix

a tire, to say nothing of applying first aid. The literati are of little use in case of a toothache.

Perhaps the people worst off among us are those of multiple accomplishment. How's that for a paradox? But consider. The great old Emersonian virtue of self-reliance, an American staple, can leave us quite unready to ask for counsel or for a hand when needed. Take the classic situation of the husband out for a drive who cannot be persuaded by his wife to stop and ask for directions. That would mean admitting he is lost.

I am not talking here about deficient training and education, and certainly not about the legendary klutz (my acquaintances will smile knowingly). The human condition itself is the topic. We come up against inadequacy in all directions—our ignorance of machinery, of foreign language, of technology and science and their terminology, of the law, of emergency resources, of domestic skills, of our own biology, of other religions (and even of our own). Apropos of this last, a scientist once told a Jesuit friend of mine that when it comes to God, it suffices to know the Golden Rule. To this my friend replied, "Yes, and about science all we need is 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.'"

There is subject matter aplenty for lifelong learning, much of it that we can ill afford to do without. Yet how little we ever master. This need not depress anyone, however. Consider all the things that Jesus Christ himself did not know—including, it would



seem, the fact that the world was not going to end soon but would go on for a long time.

What we have here is a biological and sociological and spiritual picture. In this large view, the particular cell or organ or unit or soul does not seem to count for much, yet it fits in beautifully to the whole. Saint Paul talked about this to the Corinthians, those touchy seaport Greeks who breathed a soaring humanism. The body of Christ, said he, has a swarm of disparate parts and benefits from the graces and callings of them all, including the most frail and the least able.

Christian teaching has not by any means slighted the gifts of the individual or the adventurous road that each one walks, as we can tell from this portion of an anonymous fourth-century homily: "Those who have been considered worthy to go forth as the sons and daughters of God . . . are directed by the Spirit in varied and different ways" (*Divine Office*, Friday, 4th Week of Ordinary Time).

But each of us is, by definition, incomplete. The gospel of self-sufficiency is a bill of goods. Our happiness comes from what we can contribute to others and what we can draw from them—from the interconnection of family and of the human family. "No man is an island" (women are more likely than

men to know that)—we are made, created, for community. This gives the savor to our adult life and our religious service.

On the day that our inventory of strengths and abilities begins to seriously lessen, and reality begins to close in on us like the walls in "The Pit and the Pendulum"—at that moment, paradoxically, the blessed community surrounds us, and the true shape of our paradise awaits us. We will at that moment be able to laugh at the exclamation of our childish days: "The world is so big and I am so small, I do not like it at all, at all." The "I" may be small; the "us" is not.



Father James Torrens, S.J., is an associate editor of *America*.

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# Spirituality of the Priesthood

*Reverend Stephen J. Rossetti, Ph.D., D.Min.*

*Imagine a man whose business hounds him through the streets and across the market-place the lifelong day. He almost forgets that there is a Maker of the world. Only when the time for the afternoon prayers comes, does he remember, "I must pray." And then, from the bottom of his heart, he heaves a sigh of regret that he has spent his day on vain and idle matters, and he runs into a by-street and stands there, and prays. God holds him dear, very dear, and his prayer pierces the firmament. (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters*, p. 69)*

**Y**ou have asked me to write a reflection on the current state of the spirituality of the Catholic priesthood in America. I do so willingly. Nevertheless, I am cognizant that the thoughts contained herein are simply the perspective of one man, who himself is struggling to understand what it means to be a priest today and who is essaying to learn what it means to live this life authentically.

For anyone engaged in this task, it would be tempting, and facile, to launch immediately into a discussion of what is wrong with the spiritual lives of today's priests. It is easy to catalogue their mistakes and to point out what is lacking. The last few years have witnessed a public exposure of priestly sins, particularly in the area of sexual misconduct. While the stories that have come to light are generally true, they do not present the whole picture.

Instead, let us begin with what is right with our priests. This is a more difficult task—not because

there is a lack of goodness, but because failings and sins are more readily noticeable and more easily highlighted. As a seminary homiletics professor said many years ago, "It is easier to preach the Bad News than it is to preach the Good News."

I am currently assigned to a psychiatric hospital for priests and religious (Saint Luke Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland). We receive, and attempt to help, priests, religious sisters, and brothers who are struggling with a wide variety of psychological disorders. Many of them have been involved in some type of destructive behavior.

In our house, the dark underside of people who minister is placed in high relief. There is a daily diet of alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, compulsive overeating, anonymous sex, child abuse, and a variety of personality disorders that have wreaked havoc on congregations. Is there any place that should speak more loudly about what is wrong with our priests? Is there any place that screams more loudly the "Bad News"?

Interestingly enough, our turnover of staff is very low. When we hire people, they stay. The Institute has been in existence for about fifteen years, and many of our therapists have been here for over a decade. This is particularly surprising in comparison with the high rate of turnover in secular facilities. After a few years, burnout is expected.

This high retention is partly due to the professional commitment of the staff, many of whom are themselves dedicated Catholic ministers. But the answer also lies in what our patients bring with them. These priests and religious, no matter how broken, almost universally bring a faith and a courage that are uplifting. Despite their difficulties, there is an undercurrent of virtue struggling to emerge.

This article consists of a paper prepared by the author for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry.

As one lay psychiatrist in a similar facility that treats clergy said, "My worst priest client is better in treatment than my best secular client." I believe that the virtues of faith and courage, so important in the healing process, account in part for the positive rates of treatment success among clergy and religious.

I recall hearing a priest speak of a confrere who had recently left the priesthood. The man had said his reason for leaving was that he had lost his faith. Everyone who heard of it was stunned. People can understand a man leaving to marry, as many have done. But this was unthinkable—a priest who no longer believed. Indeed, it was an exceptional and shocking story.

The strength of the spirituality of our priests lies in their faith. No matter how psychologically healthy or damaged a priest might be, or how well or poorly constructed his homilies, from pulpit after pulpit, Sunday after Sunday, one hears the truth preached. When all is said and done, in analyzing our priests' spirituality, one can surely say, "They are men of faith."

## FAITHFUL MINISTERS

In 1993 the National Federation of Priests' Councils (NFPC) surveyed 1,186 priests in the United States. Part of the survey asked about the overall satisfaction and morale of priests. The NFPC found that 91 percent of priests said they were "utilizing their important skills and abilities in their ministry." The survey revealed that only 7 percent were thinking of leaving the priesthood. When asked what aspects of the priesthood they found most fulfilling, the respondents said the greatest source of satisfaction was "administering the sacraments and presiding over liturgy." The next greatest source was "preaching the Word and the opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives."

I can think of no better definition of the spirituality of a parish priest: that is, living among the people, preaching the Word, celebrating the Eucharist, administering the sacraments, being a part of the people's lives. Our priests maintain a vital contact with the core of their priestly spirituality. It helps to keep them spiritually and psychologically alive. In this process, their spirits are nourished.

The NFPC survey results confirm my own impressions that priests are faithful ministers who find much satisfaction in their daily work. They sit with the dying. They visit the sick. They celebrate the sacraments. They preach the Word. In short, when "crunch" time comes, they are there. And priests find much gratification in this work.

When conducting workshops with groups of priests, I often end by thanking them for all they do.

Many times the laity are generous in thanking their priests. Perhaps we, as peers or as church leaders, could be more generous in expressing our thanks.

When I was first ordained, I naively wondered why a priest would leave the active ministry. Now, after years of ministry, cognizant of all the stresses and pressures under which a priest ministers, I am edified when a man has been a lifelong and faith-filled priest.

There are an increasing number of ways in which a commitment to Catholic priesthood is countercultural. Some of these include our call to preach chastity in a society that glorifies sex, to work for justice and equality in a culture that often represents neither, and to stand firmly for the sacredness of life in a world that is becoming increasingly violent.

In addition, the priest's promise of celibacy is receiving less and less support, even within the ranks of the faithful. In a survey I conducted of 1,810 active Catholics in the United States and Canada, only 30.5 percent supported the requirement of priestly celibacy.

Yet our priests remain faith-filled ministers to the people.

## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Nevertheless, upon delving further into the spiritual lives of our priests, we find many who are not personally thriving. To find out what is going wrong with the spirituality of these men, it might be instructive to look at the life of a priest who is doing well. The elements that make his priesthood flourish might be precisely those that are lacking in others.

Father Jim, a priest friend and cathedral rector, celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary of priesthood a few months ago. Father Jim exemplifies much of what is good in priesthood today. Besides being a good administrator, he is a caring shepherd of souls, with a special love of the poor. Many street people know him by name. He continues to lead an inner-city project that builds dozens of low-cost houses. Yet Jim is not a man who wears his faith on his sleeve. He is an avid golfer, occasionally likes a cigar, and is as apt to be seen on the ski slopes or on the golf course as in the chapel.

At his anniversary liturgy, he told of a parishioner who asked him how he had remained in the priesthood for so many years and yet kept his sanity and sense of humor. During the homily, Jim repeated the question and gave his answer. He attributed his success to three things. First, he spoke of the love, faith, and support of his parents and family. This was especially poignant because his mother had died only weeks before. Second, he spoke about the support of his friends, especially his priest friends, many of whom were seated on the altar with him at that moment. Finally, in front of the crowd gathered in the



cathedral, Jim spoke about having a personal relationship with Jesus.

We always knew Father Jim as a man of faith and dedication to the people. What we had not seen so publicly was the inner depth of this priest's spirituality. It must be this inner depth that has fueled his faith and dedication for twenty-five years.

It has been said that priests have a difficult time speaking openly about their sexuality. This is true. But there is another subject that is almost never discussed in public and that is much more intimate to a priest than his sexuality: his inner relationship with God. Each of us sitting in the cathedral that day was struck by this man's witness to having a "personal relationship with Jesus."

## **FACING THE TRUTH**

What does it mean to have such a relationship? Having a personal relationship with anyone, including God, requires facing and telling the truth. When their priesthood does not go well, I find, many priests are unable to do that.

At our facility, an important part of the initial evaluation of priests admitted for treatment is a spiritual assessment. The men are asked to speak about their ministerial and spiritual lives. Why did they become priests? Who is God for them? How do they pray? With occasional exceptions, their answers are similar. They speak in glowing terms of God. They speak of him as a loving Father. These men relate how effective they themselves have been as pastors. They say there is nothing they can think of to improve their spiritual lives. This idealistic portrayal of their spirituality stands in stark contrast to their often dismembered personal lives. These priests come to our unit in psychological "pieces," in need of serious assistance, yet they profess a perfect spirituality. Something is drastically amiss.

I remember years ago working with a priest who was dying of AIDS. After a few sessions, we got onto the subject of his spiritual life. He told me that he had stopped praying several months earlier. When I asked why, he said, "Nothing was happening."

I responded, "Well, how were you praying?"

He said, "I entered the chapel, sat down, gave thanks and praise to God. I did this over and over again. Nothing happened. I finally gave up."

I thought for a moment and said, "I see. Tell me, Father, how are you really feeling toward God?"

He responded, "I am angry and frightened. I am dying of AIDS!"

"Well, then," I suggested, "I recommend that you go back into the chapel and tell God the truth."

He was very much afraid to say such things to God,

particularly in light of his situation. Nevertheless, he did as suggested. With that, his prayer life began to move again.

Many priests who come to the Institute have stopped praying privately. When you ask them why, they offer a number of rationalizations: "I am too busy," "My work is my prayer," or "I am praying always, so I do not need to set aside times for prayer." It is hard to imagine a priest growing in a personal relationship with God without consistent recourse to private prayer.

Often, underneath rationalizations for not praying, there is fear. In the silence of private prayer, one's inner angers, conflicts, and fears surface. Praying honestly necessarily involves facing one's inner "demons." This is a frightening task.

Others steer away from prayer because they are afraid of what God will say. Many of them grew up in punishing or threatening environments. Despite their profession that God loves them, they retain a long-remembered sense that meeting God will involve judgment and punishment. To some, despite protestations to the contrary, facing God is a frightening thought.

Sometimes fueling this fear of God's judgment is a series of sinful or dysfunctional behaviors that a priest may not have been able to overcome. Spending time in daily private prayer will necessarily bring these inner conflicts into the foreground. An honest prayer will call him to reform his life. He may not yet be willing to do so.

Having a personal relationship with someone requires truth telling. So many of our priests who are personally broken are afraid of the truth. They are afraid of facing it themselves, and they are even more afraid of sharing it with another, especially God. It is no wonder that they stop praying. They have lost touch with the truth. And without prayer, there can be no ongoing personal relationship with God.

## **PRAYING FROM THE HEART**

At our Institute, we recently ran a study that found that the average intelligence quotient of our priest patients is 122, which is well above the societal norm of 100. This places our men in the upper 7 percent of their peers. Priests, as a group, are very bright men.

Also, in their education and training, they have developed their intellectual skills well. Catholic priests are verbal men who engage regularly in public speaking. They can debate ideas and abstract concepts easily. Indeed, these qualities are important to the successful ministry of a priest.

Nevertheless, having a personal relationship with Jesus also means praying from the heart, the place within which he dwells. Yet so many of the men who

wither in priesthood cannot find the “heart” because they are stuck in their “heads.”

I recently did an assessment of a priest who had been involved in a long series of sexual relationships. I asked him if he had a personal relationship with Our Lord. He said, “Yes, of course.” I asked him to explain what that relationship was.

He responded, “To have a personal relationship with Jesus means to think as Jesus thought.”

In the course of the interview, time and again, I searched for a moment in that priest’s life when he had truly encountered Jesus. I could find none. His spiritual life was a long series of intellectual thoughts devoid of contact with God.

Developing a personal relationship with God, or anyone else, involves the important task of moving our prayer and dialogue out of the head and into the heart. In this case, the term *heart*, used in a metaphorical sense, does not refer only to one’s affective life; it primarily indicates “the locus of vital forces” in a person, to quote Xavier Leon-Dufour in the *Dictionary of the New Testament*. It is one’s most “hidden place,” the place where “the spirit of the Son dwells.”

Moving out of the head and into the heart can be very difficult for a man who may have little idea how to deal with his affective side, much less the deeper dimensions of his self. In touching his inner heart, he makes himself vulnerable to God and to others. This can be a terrifying prospect.

Yet it is so important to open our inner selves to the other. We have a great desire to be known and to be loved. It is in the heart that we experience both.

We are not alone in this task. The Spirit of God dwells in our hearts, and that Spirit enables us to pray from our hearts. As Saint Paul said in his Letter to the Romans, “The Spirit too helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in speech. He who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means” (8:26–27).

It is important to note that the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Praying from the heart means being vulnerable before God. It means praying from our brokenness. This is difficult. It is hard enough for us to accept that we are broken, much less to learn to pray out of our brokenness. As priests, we accept with compassion the failings of our penitents, but we are often particularly harsh and unforgiving with ourselves. To have a truly personal relationship with God, we must learn to accept our own failings and to pray from the heart.

## SUPPORT OF FRIENDS

To speak about the strength of one’s spiritual life and to speak only about a personal relationship with

God is not enough. Indeed, Father Jim witnessed to the importance of friends, especially priest friends, in his ability to maintain a vibrant priestly life.

Many years ago, the bishop of Syracuse, New York, spoke of his interviews with priests who were on the verge of leaving active ministry. He shared with the presbyterate of his diocese the one question that he always asked them: “Do you have any priest friends?” The bishop said the answer was always no.

While I personally know of men who have left the active ministry who did have priest friends, the bishop’s point is an important one. The isolated priest—especially the one cut off from his peers—has placed himself in a precarious situation.

I recall asking psychiatrist Frank Valcour, in regard to the priests he sees in treatment, “Is there any one factor you see as common among them?” He thought for a moment and responded, “They have no friends.” Indeed, the ability to make lasting, intimate relationships is a *sine qua non* of psychological health. I believe it holds a similarly important place in the spiritual health of our priests. “One who has no love for the brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

Again, the NFPC study is instructive. Priests rate highly “the feeling of well-being from life with other priests.” In the early 1990s I conducted my own study of 314 priests from the United States and Canada. When given the statement, “Overall, I am satisfied with the priests we have in the church today,” 78.8 percent agreed. Indeed, many priests do find support from their brother priests. I believe it is very important to do so. *Grace Under Pressure*, a 1995 study by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), noted that priests receive support from other important sources as well, such as family and male and female friends.

## SOME PRIESTS LONELY

A couple of years ago, I was conducting a spiritual assessment of a priest who had had some psychological difficulties. I asked him if he had any friends. “Yes,” he responded emphatically. I then asked him who his closest friend was. When he gave the name of another priest, I asked when was the last time he had seen him. The man responded, “He died five years ago.”

Another time, I asked a priest who his closest friend was, and he named the provincial. After speaking to the provincial, I found out that they were not close friends but had only worked together on the order’s council. They were acquaintances, not friends.

Virtually every priest cognitively realizes that he should have friends. Our men know they need support to maintain a vibrant spiritual and ministerial life. But the same demons of rationalization and intellectual-



ization that hinder some priests' relationship with God can also hinder their relationships with others.

Ministry provides a series of acquaintanceships that can masquerade as intimate friendships. Sometimes our men fool themselves into thinking that their acquaintances are soul-friends. For this reason, when a priest responds affirmatively to the question of whether he has friends, I ask a series of follow-up questions: When was the last time you saw a friend? What did you do together? What sorts of things did you talk about? When was your last vacation? With whom did you go?

Sadly, some priests do not go on vacation and have no one with whom to go. Many have difficulty revealing important aspects of their lives to others. Some have not seen their "closest" friends in years. In truth, many of our priests, despite being surrounded daily by hundreds of people, are desperately alone.

An essential part of our clinical staff's work with priests is helping them develop the skills to make real friends. Making such friends requires an appropriate degree of self-disclosure, particularly regarding one's emotions. Some priests cannot share what they are feeling because they are not aware of their emotional states. Others are aware but have no language or experience to express themselves. Still others are too embarrassed or frightened. We cannot assume that all the men who enter priesthood have the skills necessary to make friends. More than a few do not.

People who are alone sometimes turn to destructive alternatives to satisfy their inner craving for human intimacy. At the very least, without a personal relationship with God and a life-giving intimacy with others, the spiritual lives of our priests become barren. What often prevails for these intellectually bright men is an empty series of platitudes and a life lived solely in the intellect.

On the other hand, human intimacy—particularly that derived from relationships founded in Christ—can be an important source of nourishment for our spiritual lives. It is no accident that Father Jim goes on an annual retreat with a close priest friend. They pray together and provide mutual encouragement for each other. Sharing one's faith with a soul-friend can be a powerful source of support for priestly life.

## **MODESTLY HEALTHY BACKGROUND**

It is important not to forget the first thing to which Father Jim attributed his ability to maintain a vibrant priestly spirituality: the love, faith, and support of his parents and family. While Jim's family was not perfect, it had given him a solid foundation for his developing psychic balance and faith.

The demands and stresses on a priest in parochial ministry today are formidable, and they are relentless.

To be surrounded by over a thousand people who look to you for spiritual sustenance requires a high level of psychological and spiritual health. Some of our men do not have a sufficient degree of this health.

As a child, Father Jim was blessed with a solid family background. In our candidate assessment procedures, we do our best to screen out those who do not have a strong enough background to withstand the demands of ministry. We also use the assessment to identify areas of needed growth during formation. Psychotherapy and spiritual direction can be of great help to those who need assistance.

But there are some for whom outside assistance will never be enough; they do not and never will have the inner resources to prosper as priests in full-time ministry. For these broken men, the stresses and interpersonal demands of ministry are overwhelming. They cannot cope. As their personal and ministerial lives begin to deteriorate, there is little hope that they will maintain a lively priestly spirituality. Simply put, they will not thrive as active priests.

One would hope that future screening and formation programs will be better able to discern those for whom priesthood is not a viable option. Today, despite lengthened formation processes coupled with in-situ parish experiences, some difficulties do not surface until well after ordination.

There seems to be a budding awareness of this reality. In September 1995 the church allowed an expanded definition of the term "psychic defect" in canon 1044. Previously, the phrase had been interpreted rather narrowly to mean virtually a psychotic illness. Now, with the broader interpretation, priests who have problems with pedophilia may be taken out of ministry. This opens the door for looking at other psychological deficiencies as grounds for recognizing that a priest is not fit for ministry.

Understandably, some priests are concerned about this liberalizing of the canon because it makes abuses possible, including arbitrarily ending a priest's ministry without just cause. Nevertheless, it is also true that a number of priests will never thrive in active ministry. Some can be helped with an intensive program of spiritual and psychological renewal. But there are others for whom no amount of intervention can succeed. They are in the wrong place.

## **CHOOSE LIFE OR DEATH**

I believe that most of our men do have the potential to succeed as priests. For those who remain in active ministry, many supports are currently available. Spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation can help priests face the truth and learn to pray from the heart. But few priests have a spiritual di-

rector, and their own reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is often infrequent. Sabbaticals and personal psychotherapy are also resources offered to many priests; some have taken advantage of them, but most have not.

Regarding prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours has been abandoned by a large number of priests who have replaced it with sporadic attempts at private prayer. Diocesan retreats can be a source of assistance, but many of our priests do not use them as occasions for real spiritual growth.

Many resources are available to our priests—probably more than are available to laity in other service occupations. However, our priests' increasingly excessive workloads and sometimes crushing pastoral demands mitigate against being able to utilize these resources, either due to time constraints or emotional exhaustion. When a priest has a few spare moments and a little bit of energy, he is unlikely to think of devoting them to his spiritual life.

Simply reducing their workloads is unlikely to protect priests from burnout. In fact, sometimes the healthiest priests are the most committed to their work. More important than a priest's amount of work, I believe, is having a sense that his work is meaningful and that he has some control over his life. The quickest road to burnout is an overburdened lifestyle combined with the feeling that one is trapped in that lifestyle and cannot get out. More than a few of our men feel overworked and trapped.

Nevertheless, even if care is taken to mitigate the demands on our priests' time and energy, and to give them some control over their lives, there will always be some who will not progress well in ministry. Father Frank McNulty of the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, told a story about doing exit interviews with priests (i.e., interviewing men who were retiring after many years of ministry). In one two-week period he saw two priests who had grown up in the same hometown, attended the same seminary, received similar pastoral assignments, and retired in the same year. When the first priest came in, he had a scowl on his face. He told Father McNulty exactly what he thought of the priesthood and left. Some time later, the second priest came in. He related that although his priesthood had been difficult, he had loved the people, they had loved him, and he wished he could do it all over again. Father McNulty could not explain how two men with similar lives could have experienced priesthood so differently.

As church leaders, we can and should present to our men quality resources for living a vibrant spiritual life. We can and should help them structure their lives in meaningful and healthy ways. We need to provide ministerial and lifestyle options that allow

them some choice and flexibility. In addition, we must encourage them when they are discouraged, praise them when they have done well, and call them to accountability when they have erred.

Nevertheless, this will not take away the fact that some of them will become faith-filled priests while others will end up bitter, angry old men. We, as a church, must take responsibility for the environments and the structures in which we place our priests. We take responsibility for our treatment of these men, but we cannot take responsibility for their personal choices.

The theological concept of free will is constantly operative. To quote from Deuteronomy, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live" (30:19).

In the priesthood, there are those who find life and those who do not. Some are incapable of finding life in the priesthood. Some would otherwise have thrived in ministry, had they been given more appropriate formation and ongoing support. For this latter group we ought to provide more concentrated assistance. Of course, there will always be those who do not do well because, in the daily decisions of life, they choose badly.

## SPIRITUALITY OF JOY

How can we tell what path we are choosing? I know of a place to begin. Look in the mirror. What does your face communicate? The expressions on our faces, especially in our eyes, have been crafted by ourselves. Is yours the face of an angry, bitter man, or is it the face of the priest who wishes he could do it all over again?

A number of our priests see in the mirror an angry or sullen reflection. While anger is a normal emotion, there are those whose inner selves have been filled with an implacable ire. Their buried hostility and resentment eat away at their vitality and destroy the joy of their hearts. We should be careful not to succumb to such a fate.

Some time ago, we were debating whether to recommend residential care for a priest. He desperately did not want to attend an intensive therapeutic program. Nevertheless, he had significant psychological problems that needed attention. We considered outpatient care, but when the time for the decision came, we finally opted to recommend the more intensive residential care. The deciding factor in my own mind was the priest's statement, "I do my work and then go home alone. I am waiting to die." He was a stern and joyless man who never smiled and seemed burdened by the weight of the world. Is this any way for a priest



who has been given the Good News to live? Can he be a witness to a truly Christian life?

In the beginning of residential treatment, this priest would walk the halls of the Institute with a sullen look, shoulders slumped over and head bowed. He did this day after day. But after a while, things slowly began to change. One day, out of the corner of my eye, I caught him with his head up, smiling. It was not a superficial smile but a broad smile that came from the heart. As that point, I knew he would be okay. Joy was returning to his life.

Joy is not simply an emotional state that crests and falls with life circumstances. One moment we are happy because positive things are happening; the next minute we are sad because of the many difficult moments in life. Happiness and sadness are passing emotions. Joy, on the other hand, is a spiritual reality that is a gift of the Spirit. As Paul says in his Letter to the Galatians, "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity" (5:22).

This joy springs from the Spirit dwelling in our hearts. It does not wipe away the sorrow and the pain; in fact, it can coexist with much suffering. The joy of the Spirit gives us strength, radiates through us to give healing to others, and remains a precious gift to the friends of God. If there is any one sign of a priestly life well-lived, it is the presence of joy.

## **SPIRITUAL REGENERATION OF PRIESTHOOD**

Each day, I spend much time working on the psychological health of our priests. More and more, I believe that much of our current need is in the area of spirituality. Facing the truth, praying from the heart, having soul-friends—these are the things that our priests in trouble cannot do. This is what we must help them do.

It may be that the time is right to put our energies into a spiritual regeneration of the priesthood. By this I do not mean using our spirituality as a way of not facing the truth, which many of our priest patients try to do. Rather, our spirituality must begin with the conflicted and intense realities of our complex lives, give them meaning in the Christian message, and transform them by the Spirit into a life of joy.

In the end, priesthood and celibacy are primarily spiritual realities. If our men do not live in the Spirit, they cannot be healthy and happy priests. If they do not live in the Spirit, they certainly will never find life in a celibate existence. And if celibacy is not eventually internalized in a positive way, there is little hope that it will be authentically lived.

I remember a priest who said he did not have a "mystical" sense of celibacy. Rather, he had a "functional" sense. When I asked what he meant, he ex-

plained that celibacy's only worth was in making one's self available to others. It was not surprising to find, in the course of the spiritual assessment, no indications that he had any awareness of the workings of grace or of a life-giving relationship with God. It was also not surprising to learn that he had been involved in a long series of sexual relationships.

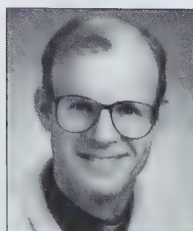
On the other hand, Father Jack, a priest of twenty-seven years, found himself graced by God. During an interview for the NCEA study, he said, "One of the things I had asked for is the gift of prayer. I am always amazed when I find myself being called to prayer after a long day, when I really wouldn't think that I would want to pray. I believe it is the gift of prayer that is calling me to prayer."

Priesthood in the Western world is becoming increasingly countercultural. Many of the human supports that we once relied on to attract and keep people in the priesthood are being stripped away. A functional approach to priesthood is no longer enough, if it ever was. One can only surmise that those who stay in ministry and find life do so with the direct intervention of grace.

This era might be called a time of priestly purification. Psychologists might call it a season of growth. I think it demands much from very human men. Nevertheless, each of us must become a mystic in our own ordinary way. That is, we must find spiritual nourishment in a personal relationship with God; we must also be nurtured by grace as it is mediated through others.

Mysticism, whether "ordinary" or extraordinary, is always at the invitation of a God who bestows the Spirit where he wills. Father Jack realized that his ability to pray at the end of a long day was itself a gift. When one steps back and looks at the journey of a priest—entering the priesthood, remaining in the crucible, and finding joy—it is clearly the working of grace. But it requires trust on the priest's part—especially during the dark hours that will invariably come—that He who began the good work in him will bring it to completion (Phil. 1:6).

It is his Spirit in us, sometimes palpably present, that not only helps us to survive in a celibate ministry but also enables us to know much satisfaction and joy. We eventually come to realize the truth that Saint Paul, a Christian mystic, spoke: "It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me."



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# Personal Development and Boundaries Shape Ministry

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**I**n order for a religious to witness to healthy celibate commitment and engage in responsible and compassionate ministry, he or she must have adequately addressed certain psychosexual issues. While no human being finally resolves these developmental conflicts, the healthy adult has worked through life tasks to an extent that is age-appropriate. These tasks include the management of dependence, control, productivity, identity, intimacy, and mentoring. Clearly, healthy affective development is foundational for the formation of an integrated spirituality and effective relational functioning in ministry. Those religious who have, for whatever reasons, been unable to work through these developmental tasks place themselves at much greater risk for serious interpersonal difficulties in their ministerial and communal lives.

It is important to note that the earlier a developmental arrest occurs, the more serious the pathological acting-out. That is, those religious who are caught in conflicts revolving around dependency and authority are at far greater risk of engaging in destructive personal and interpersonal dynamics than those, for example, who are struggling with intimacy issues.

## **FROM DEPENDENCE TO INTERDEPENDENCE**

Religious who have achieved adequate resolution of dependency conflicts exhibit the capacity to trust

themselves and to place trust in others. They come across as comfortably self-reliant, yet at the same time able to rely on and entrust themselves to others. They have a well-developed sense of physical and psychic interpersonal boundaries. Respect for others' privacy and need for personal solitude, as well as the capability to engage in interdependent activity with peers, characterize the adult religious who engages in transparent interdependence and friendship.

Individuals who are conflicted in this area from the standpoint of being overly dependent frequently form relationships based on need. Such "A-frame" relationships are fraught with codependent neediness. If one partner in the "A-frame" becomes more independent and able to stand on his or her own, no longer needing to lean on the other, the relationship enters into crisis. In this instance, the less healthy partner affectively collapses as he or she is confronted with having to exist autonomously.

Relationships of dependency are plagued by intense jealousy and enmeshment. Often, the partners take turns in assuming the roles of parent and child. They each achieve considerable secondary gain from "taking care of" the other or from "being taken care of" by the other. A fused pseudo-intimacy masquerades momentarily as adult intimacy but generally collapses.



Typically, individuals involved in psychosexual conflicts with dependence and neediness form intense, exclusive, emotionally charged relationships that, after a brief duration, terminate in rage as unmet needs fail to be sufficiently satisfied. Disillusionment sets in when one party discovers that the other is incapable of being the all-loving, all-caring, nurturing and giving person he or she was initially perceived to be.

When this conflict with dependence is acted out in the sexual arena, serious problems with boundaries are exhibited. The individual is incapable of perceiving where the self ends and the other begins. Sexual behavior exhibits "engulfment," whereby the person attempts to incorporate or assume the other into the self and thus possess the other. The unconscious dynamic at work pertains to the desire to make up for what is lacking in the self by incorporating the other. Seriously impaired personal and interpersonal judgment leads to the exploitation and forced submission of others as the individual struggles to become a "whole" person.

At the other end of the continuum are those religious who are fiercely independent, overly autonomous. Lacking the capacity to trust others, these individuals are suspicious and highly guarded. They tend to be alienated loners who, because of the terror of being hurt by broken relationships, live isolated, affectively frozen existences. In both the overly dependent and the overly independent person, insecurity and pervasive feelings of inadequacy reside at the core of the character structure. Consider the following cases:

*A 60-year-old woman religious repeatedly refuses to respond to her congregation leader's requests to assume various community and ministerial assignments unless her friend, a 57-year-old sister, can be assigned with her. They have lived together for eighteen years and tend to speak in the first-person plural. "We" has nearly totally obliterated the "I" as enmeshment has thwarted freedom to respond to the mission in accord with individual gifts and talents. Social perception of the "couple" has deprived each individual of the possibility for developing self-confidence and personal esteem apart from the other.*

*A 53-year-old priest spent every vacation with adolescent boys who were parishioners. It was common for him to go skinny-dipping with them, give them "rub-downs," hold them, and hug them. At times he became overtly genitally sexually active with them. Upon being confronted about his behavior, he stated that he was simply trying to help the boys feel comfortable with their sexuality, since his father had never helped him. Poor judgment, sexual exploitation, professional boundary violations, and abuse of his fiduciary role characterize this dependent man, who desperately sought to iden-*

*tify with and depend on the affection of adolescents to make up for what he felt lacking in himself.*

Obviously, a goal of all healthy adult interaction is the achievement of interdependence based on openness, honesty, inclusivity, and mutuality. Able to tolerate independence in the other as well as separation from the other, the mature adult manifests appropriate self-reliance and comfort with inner authority.

## CONTROL AND AUTHORITY

Mature religious exhibit a sense of inner authority. They are able to exercise good personal and social judgment as they engage in decision making and the management of conflict in communal and ministerial situations. Aware of both sexual and aggressive impulses, they are able to manage these strong feelings in ways that are responsible and respectful. Because they have attained a sense of comfort with their own authority, they are comfortable in the presence of others who are strong, confident, and exude personal power. Not overly intimidated by authority figures, they have no need to engage in oppositional acting-out with leadership personnel or to become personally hostile or antagonistic toward those in positions of leadership. They have achieved a capacity to differ with others without dismissing those with whom they differ.

Persons conflicted in this area of development utilize manipulation and devaluation as means of control. Because of their strong need to subordinate others, these individuals use intimidation, threats, criticism, and angry outbursts in their interactions with others whom they perceive to be powerful. Both aggressive and passive-aggressive behavior characterize such people, whose need to control others reflects an inner life plagued by feelings of being out of control. Frequently, they are described as characterologically rigid—lacking in flexibility and unwilling to bend. Their interpersonal relationships and their spirituality are characterized by external compliance with duty and obligation (for example, being the "good religious"), while their inner world is filled with rebellion and vitriolic judgment. Defiant and oppositional, they must devalue others in order to make themselves feel powerful and in control.

*A 62-year-old religious, professed to be a "traditional" priest, does not subscribe to the changes initiated by the Second Vatican Council. He is infuriated with his provincial and with the local bishop, whom he holds responsible for allowing religious and clergy to "drift into laxity." Consequently, he has refused to live in community with other, "lax" religious and has refused to attend any provincial meetings over the past twelve years. Recently, he was accused of raping a woman. On being*

confronted, he admitted that he had been sexually active with a number of women. This was a way he could get back at authority for imposing celibacy on the clergy. He agreed that his relationships with women were vindictive, but in his rage at women, at authority figures, and at the institutional church, he felt potent. In this religious, filled with rage and out of control, a primitive fusion of sex and aggression resulted in seriously exploitative behavior, massive rationalization, projection, manipulation, and denial of the seriousness of the consequences of his behavior. This man had little control over his impulses and envisioned others as objects to be used for his distorted need for affirmation of his powerfulness.

A 41-year-old woman religious, furious with authority, consistently dealt with her provincial in a passive-aggressive manner. She engaged in conversations with others, both within and outside the congregation, focused on devaluing and criticizing the provincial. As she confided in others, she gave the impression to each person in whom she confided that that person alone was the bearer of her secret impressions of the provincial. Portraying herself as a powerless victim in the face of a controlling leader, she justified keeping a hidden stash of money in her closet, behind her clothes. When she had squirreled away sufficient funds, she put a down-payment on a condominium and vanished one weekend without the knowledge of her local community or provincial. On being confronted about her actions, she indicated that she resented being challenged, that she was "owed" this and would no longer allow herself to be a victim of leadership's demands. Using a reservoir of passive-aggressive tactics, she was able to hold her provincial emotionally hostage. The provincial had effectively become paralyzed in the face of the woman's devaluation. The sister's need to control was masked by a weak and somewhat pitiful self-presentation to others, which served to manipulate them into supporting her in the face of the powerful, allegedly demanding authority figure.

## PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

A sense of enthusiasm and enjoyment about engaging in ministry characterize religious who are able to balance work, prayer, and leisure. These individuals enjoy cognitive investigation and find their creativity heightened through cooperation in task accomplishment. Their socialization skills are well developed. Consequently, these religious are able to form solid work alliances and establish collegial relationships with people of both genders.

When individuals are struggling with the tasks associated with this developmental stage, they are plagued by feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. A

pervasive sense of not feeling valued or appreciated leads them to engage in severe self-criticism. Often these persons choose to isolate themselves from others and engage in compulsive work activity. Such overidentification with work underscores a self-definition of "I am what I do." The more they are able to accomplish, the greater their sense of worth. This fallacy frequently leads to exhaustion and further self-deprecation as they realize they can never make up for the emptiness they feel inside simply by working more.

In the sexual area, aberrations in this stage of development can lead individuals to view sexual behavior as performance. A frenetic need to prove adequacy is associated with compulsively driven sexual acting-out, which is largely devoid of intimacy and focused exclusively on the self. Interpersonal relationships are thus characterized by shallowness.

A 52-year-old woman religious became ill with a chronic disease that resulted in her no longer being able to engage in full-time ministry. She felt profoundly useless. Unable to carry a full workload, she felt that she might as well die. She contemplated taking her life. This woman had little sense of her beauty as a human being. Her total value was embedded in her ability to work. As a result of her long history of work addiction, she had failed to develop meaningful friendships. At this point in her life, she was confronted with redefining herself and coming to terms with her identity apart from performance.

A 46-year-old religious brother professor has taken flight from his colleagues and community members as he has thrown himself into his research. His highly competitive manner of relating to other faculty members and his need to prove himself intellectually superior to others has resulted in his being alienated and largely disliked. His behavior was characterized by a need to prove himself to others continually. Ironically, the more he tried to attest to his own value, the less valued he was by both faculty members and his own religious brothers.

A 37-year-old priest used compulsive sexual acting-out with anonymous adult partners as a frantic way to prove to himself that he was a "real man." Preoccupied with fears of being impotent and inadequate, he found himself plagued by guilt and shame in a self-defeating cycle that served to intensify his feeling of being insignificant. Compulsive behavior served as a noxious defense, attempting to bind this man's intense anxiety generated from deep-seated conflicts about self-esteem and male identity.

## SENSE OF IDENTITY

Persons who have achieved an adequate sense of identity convey a sense of comfort with themselves



and with their sexual identity and adequacy. Identity is solidified as persons grow in comfortable recognition of having internalized aspects of each parent—and thus are able to recognize how their own separate ego identity informs self-image and social interactions. Because they have a sufficiently developed ego, religious with a solid sense of self are able to establish deep friendships with others. They exhibit the capacity to commit to the mission rather than becoming overly preoccupied with themselves.

Religious who are unsure about their identity are often heavily reliant upon role as their defining feature. The “empty suit” phenomenon typifies their relational style in ministry. That is, they act from the perspective of being brother, sister, or father, not from a consistent experience of themselves as individual human beings. To lose the title of profession leaves them bereft of identity.

When conflicts around identity enter the sexual realm, preoccupation with sexual and aggressive impulses and sexual identity confusion surface. Consumed with trying to “find themselves,” these persons spend inordinate amounts of time in self-absorbed scrutiny focused around fundamental issues pertaining to being male or female. These individuals also tend to form intense, somewhat intrusive relationships with peers in an effort to discover who they are.

*A 39-year-old religious stated that he chose priesthood because others would call him “Father” and he would have a religious congregation with a powerful reputation to buttress his frail sense of self. He believed that he would feel important and achieve a status that no one else in his family had achieved.* This example of the “empty suit” phenomenon sets the stage for serious depression as this man begins to confront the truth of his inner emptiness.

*A 55-year-old woman religious, terribly uncomfortable with her identity as a woman, dressed in androgynous clothing. She justified her appearance by saying that women religious should not be attractive because they would be “selling out” on their feminist identity and would be “advertising” for a partner. She had no close friends of either gender because she felt it was important for her to be equally close to all. She insisted that she always be called by her male religious name, Sister Joseph.* Frightened of her sexuality and her femininity, this religious had a well-constructed rationale for her behavior. However, she was lonely, depressed, and insecure and came across in social interchange as brittle and superficial.

*A 60-year-old religious, not sure whether he was homosexual or heterosexual, engaged in a frantic search for companionship. Unable to deal with his anger at his father's harshness toward him and his mother's controlling style, he had felt put down most of his life. He*

*had entered religious life in order to have some identity. His involvement in promiscuous sexual acting-out was a desperate attempt to find out who he was. Self-disregard plummeted him into high-risk behavior that endangered his well-being and was exploitative of others.*

## CAPACITY FOR INTIMACY

Healthy adult religious accept themselves and love themselves in their imperfections and struggles. They are able to feel and express tenderness toward others and experience an affective relationship with God. They believe they are basically accepted by others, as they believe they are basically accepted and loved by God. While these religious are certain of having the capacity to distinguish between sexual desire and love, as well as the capacity to have a genital sexual relationship, they are also committed to refraining from acting on sexual impulses in ways that compromise their commitment. They are able to form deep, loving relationships that are responsible, respectful, and marked by integrity. Their relationships with others are characterized by genuineness and spontaneity. They tend to be well-liked by others.

On the other hand, religious who are conflicted over intimacy issues relate from a posture of “ego-stinginess.” They are narcissistically preoccupied and tend not to be able to engage others in sustained interaction. Others tire of these religious because they are bereft of expressed affectivity and project a cold, distant demeanor.

*A 70-year-old religious was severely depressed. He stated that he had no friends. Presenting himself with robotic rigidity, he had a frozen appearance that was both forbidding and disconcerting. He had no cognizance of his feelings, nor did he have any use for emotive interchange. The intellect was superior to “mushy” affectivity. As he grew older, he found himself tormented by questions about the meaning of his life. He had spent large amounts of community funds on purchasing the latest computer accoutrements and stated that he felt at home in his room with his computer. He secretly wondered, however, why he had ever chosen the religious lifestyle. He was concerned about what he considered to be compulsive masturbation, devoid of fantasy.* This lonely man was unable to continue the cognitively defended stance against friendship and closeness that had characterized his entire religious life. As aging interjected additional stress, his defensive operations were insufficient to contain his affect. Masturbation became a misdirected means by which he attempted momentarily to distract himself from his pervasive sadness.

*A 40-year-old woman religious fell in love with a priest. Terrified of her strong emotions, she never expressed any of her sexual feelings verbally or physically. She spoke to no one in her religious community about her situation and believed that the only way for her to manage the situation was to ask to be transferred to an overseas province. If she were far enough away from the priest, she believed, her vocation would not be threatened.* The geographical cure is largely unsuccessful, as internal dynamics continue to surface wherever the person goes. Had this woman been able to talk about the situation with a trusted member of her community—a counselor or a spiritual director—she would likely have been able to use the experience as an opportunity for profound human and spiritual growth. Instead, fearful and ashamed of her feelings, she hid from them rather than choosing to face them.

## MENTORING AND GENERATIVITY

As religious age well, a sense of openness and comfort with serving as mentor, teacher, and wisdom figure to younger people coalesces. Seeing themselves as having benefited from and having been blessed by years in communal life in mission, they are at ease with themselves as “elders.” This is in stark contrast to those religious who are invested in denying their aging by shunning any and all situations that remind them of their seniority. An unwillingness to retain close friendships with their peers because they are moving closer to death leads them to focus on fostering friendships almost solely with younger people. This “Peter Pan” syndrome results in an air of unreality about these religious.

*A 62-year-old religious consistently wore teen styles. Grunge-layered clothing complemented her long, permed and dyed hair. She refused to tell anyone how old she was and surrounded herself with her high-school students. Her primary form of entertainment was attending heavy metal concerts with them.*

*Similarly, a 69-year-old religious had no friends his own age. He surrounded himself with novices and young community members, with whom he would vacation. Upon being questioned about his choices for companionship, he stated that he needed these young men to flatter and admire him. People his own age were dull and boring, he said.*

In both instances, these religious were avoiding facing the inevitability of their aging as well as the anticipatory grieving that accompanies predictable losses. At the same time, they had also deprived themselves of the companionship and solidarity that peers afford one another during important moments of transition in life. Their capacity to extend themselves

beyond personal need was limited. Generativity, by its very nature, embraces the larger social context and inspires persons to take risks toward the formation of a more just world.

No one completely resolves any of these developmental issues. Rather, at each transitional stage of life, these conflicts are apt to be revisited and addressed in a yet deeper manner. The healthy religious is unafraid to look squarely at herself or himself and identify those parts of the self that are at peace and relatively well settled and those areas that stand in need of attention. It is this fearlessness that clears the way for a continually transparent engagement in the mission of the gospel.

As religious take stock of themselves and their continually evolving and deepening relationships, they are able to engage in ministry in ways that are productive, responsible, and enlivening for themselves and those whom they serve.

### For reflection and discussion:

- *In what areas of psychosexual development do you feel particularly secure at this time in your life?*
- *What developmental issues are most challenging or difficult for you?*

## RELATIONSHIPS CORE OF MINISTRY

Relationships are the basic stuff of ministry. How awesome the reality: through relationships, the Paschal Mystery is realized and celebrated. Religious women and men, expressly committed to engage in relationships through community life, have been a tremendous gift to the church and to our world so plagued by isolationism and individualism. Through a variety of ministries, religious have sought to transform the world into a more just place and have provided ministerial environments that reflect the love of God and nourish life and growth. Religious are well aware of the fact that relationships are not secondary or accidental to life. Whether created through the lived experience of prayer, community, ministry, friendship, or service, relationships are the heart of the matter.

Persons called to religious life are often innate nurturers. They are aware that a certain amount of intimacy is important in order for healing to occur. Sexuality and spirituality are viewed as friends. When asked what characterizes healthy relationships in ministry, religious will often mention mutual respect, trust, care, empathy, and intimacy. These qualities mediate the presence of God. They also imply that one has a healthy understanding of the value of boundaries, essential to appropriate ministerial conduct. Respecting boundaries is an act of love.



## BOUNDARIES FOR MINISTERS

Boundaries are defined as limits that delineate time, place, and person. Boundaries exist across a continuum, ranging from chaotic to rigid. Boundaries that are fuzzy, unclear, confusing, and chaotic tend to work against healthy human exchange; so do boundaries that are too rigid, indifferent, remote, or insensitive. Neither end of the continuum is conducive to holistic ministerial relating. Ideally, boundaries between individuals exist without rigidity, are flexible, and are always open to a spirit of dialogue.

Healthy religious maintain clear, flexible boundaries and a clarity of purpose. Ministerial relationships have as their purpose sharing with and meeting the needs of parishioners, clients, students, directees, and people in formation, to name a few, through some kind of pastoral service. By contrast, personal relationships are those whose purpose is to meet the personal needs of the parties involved.

Boundaries are crossed in three major ways: through touch, through sexualized behavior, and through the power of role. When a religious touches a person to whom he or she is ministering, the religious must be aware of both the motivation of the touch (e.g., compassion, caring) and how the touch might be perceived by the recipient. This is especially critical at times when the other person is vulnerable.

Second, it is important not to sexualize behavior. It is true that human beings are sexual by nature, but it is crucial to ministerial interaction that the religious not communicate sexual interest or sexual content. Sexualized behavior in and of itself is neither right nor wrong, neither ethical nor unethical. For religious who make a public profession of celibate chastity, however, there is an obligation to strive to be faithful to that profession. Beyond the commitment through vows, the ethical status of sexualized behavior derives from the balance of power in the ministerial relationship. Sexualized behavior on the part of a religious is always abusive to the recipient of help.

Finally, the third way boundaries are crossed has to do with the role of the religious as a minister. It is important to be aware of the power differential between those who minister and those who are served. Boundary violations by religious are often nonsexual. Sometimes, well-meaning religious, recognizing only a sense of personal powerlessness, are naive about how much power they have in relationship with those they serve, simply by virtue of their ministerial role. It may be helpful to put nonsexual boundary issues into focus by beginning with a true but not uncommon story:

*Trish, a 28-year-old woman, is a member of Saint Marguerite Parish. On the parish staff is Sister Karen, a 48-year-old pastoral minister who has been in the*

*parish for several years. Parishioners are very fond of her. She is as ministers should be: warm, caring, sensitive, kind. It takes some courage on her part, but Trish asks for an appointment to see Sister Karen in her office about some personal matters. She is pleased that Sister Karen not only says yes but also begins to meet with her on a somewhat regular basis. She finds that Sister Karen really listens to her concerns and fears about the future. Trish begins to trust Sister Karen, feels safe with her more and more, and decides for the first time to open up about having been abused as a child. Sister Karen is empathic and tells Trish that one out of every three women in the United States has been abused. Trish feels understood.*

*Eventually, Trish asks Sister Karen to go to lunch, and Sister Karen does so willingly. It means a lot to Trish that Sister Karen takes time for her. She is further reassured when Sister Karen shares with Trish that she too suffered the trauma of abuse in her childhood. The two women begin to meet over lunch a couple of times a month, sometimes in Sister Karen's office. Trish feels that they are becoming friends as Sister Karen shares more and more about herself with her. Before and after their meetings, the two share a hug and sometimes a light kiss. This is the first time Trish feels she can really trust someone in a relationship.*

*One day Trish is talking with another parishioner, Mary, who is praising Sister Karen's ministry in the parish. Trish concurs and tells Mary that she and Sister Karen have become good friends and go to lunch somewhat regularly. She shares that she treasures the friendship, especially because it feels mutual.*

*After about six months, Trish notices that Sister Karen is pulling away but not saying anything about it. Trish takes the risk of asking if something is wrong. Sister Karen simply says that she has been too busy to get together. Trish is confused and wonders if she did something wrong. This is the first time she has felt real mutuality in a friendship. How could this be happening? What is happening?*

*Afraid she must have done something to hurt Sister Karen, Trish musters up her courage and pushes a little further. Sister Karen finally tells Trish that what they had together was not a friendship but a counseling relationship that Trish had initiated. She hands Trish the name of another counselor she might want to see and says she's sorry that Trish misinterpreted the relationship.*

*Place yourself in Trish's situation. How do you feel? What are you thinking? These are two adults. Who is responsible for the boundaries, and why?*

*Now imagine that you are Sister Karen. What has happened? Were you aware of the effects of the power of your role? What should you do when things go awry or become problematic, as they have in this case?*

When we worked with groups throughout the country and presented this real-life scenario, people had no difficulty identifying with Trish. With relative ease they named feelings of betrayal, mistrust, confusion, anger, frustration, and rage. Yet when asked who was responsible for maintaining the boundaries in this ministerial relationship, many said that both Trish and Sister Karen were responsible. That is not true. In ministry, the sister-minister is always the responsible party. Furthermore, if there is sexual activity between the sister and an adult parishioner, it is always abusive to the latter—even if there is consent from the parishioner. The extent and effect of boundary violations in ministry at the hands of women religious has been underestimated and un-researched. Ministerial misconduct has sometimes been wrapped in naivete or the need to please. It is often not visible and thus may not be viewed as a breach of efficacious ministerial care.

For another example of crossing boundaries—this time, sexual boundaries—consider the following situation:

*Father Len needed help in organizing his financial records. A parishioner, Jean, was an accountant and offered her services to Father Len free of charge. Father Len went to see her monthly for help with bookkeeping. After some months, it became routine for Father Len to take Jean to lunch after their appointment, which he saw as a means of thanking her. During their lunches, Jean confided in Father Len about difficulties she was having in her marriage. Father Len felt very sympathetic toward Jean and provided a good listening ear. On one occasion, after having a few drinks with their lunch, the two became genitally involved.*

*Following this one-time incident, Father Len felt terribly guilt-ridden and ashamed. He apologized to Jean, indicating that he had made a huge mistake. Jean thought that the intimate expression of affection meant that Father Len was in love with her and that he would leave the priesthood to marry her after she divorced her husband. When Father Len told Jean that was not what he wanted to do, she became furious.*

*Jean's rage intensified each time she went to Sunday liturgy and saw Father Len at the altar. She expressed her furor by reporting Father Len to the diocese for sexual assault. After Jean told her husband what had occurred, her husband brought suit against Father Len for alienation of affection.*

Ask yourself these questions: Why is this not a relationship between consenting adult peers? Who bears responsibility for this situation? Who will be held accountable by law? At the core of the problematic situation between Father Len and Jean is a lack of understanding of dual relationships and their consequences.

## DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

A dual relationship is one in which a religious attempts to fulfill two roles with the same person—for example, to have both a ministerial and a personal relationship with that person. Sexualized behavior within a ministerial relationship or any attempt to sexualize a pastoral relationship automatically creates a dual relationship, regardless of who initiated the relationship. We have encountered several examples of dual relationships involving religious in ministry:

- a spiritual director who became sexually involved with a directee
- a religious therapist who treated a friend
- a professed religious who became sexually active with a person in formation
- a formation director who became a close personal friend to one of the novices
- a pastoral minister who became sexually involved with a married parishioner
- a high-school teacher who became intimate with a student in the school
- a sister-researcher who used her employee as a subject in a research project
- a doctoral student and her religious brother adviser who were “drinking buddies”
- a religious counselor/psychologist/physician who attempted to treat a family member

While these examples are not illegal in the technical sense, many are unethical and can often lead to allegations of abuse, intentional infliction of emotional harm, alienation of affection, poor counseling or therapy, and sometimes sexual harassment.

There are several reasons a religious might attempt a dual relationship; among the most salient are a lack of awareness of power differences, the presence of unresolved emotional and sexual conflicts on the part of the religious, the emergence of unrecognized transference and countertransference issues, the pursuit of personal needs at the expense of others' needs, and the justification of dual relationships as necessary, inevitable, or even helpful to the client.

## POWER DIFFERENCES

Some religious appear to lack awareness of the power differential that exists between themselves and those they serve. Power and vulnerability are relative terms. In certain contexts, such as ministry, roles render one person powerful or vulnerable in relation to another. Those who have greater resources than others often have power relative to them. Conversely, those who have fewer resources are vulnerable rela-



tive to others. As ministers, we possess a certain built-in power in relation to the recipients of our care. Clients often unconsciously give over their power to ministers of the church. Many people, particularly emotionally vulnerable persons, entrust themselves to the care and concern of religious professionals. Who are the emotionally vulnerable?

**Children, who are always victims of their particular circumstances.** Obviously, children are physically smaller, socially less mature, and emotionally more underdeveloped than the adults around them. They deserve care and protection. A positive example of a religious who understands the need for boundaries when ministering to the vulnerable is the sister who is sensitive to children's needs in the classroom and who takes appropriate action when she recognizes signs of abuse in a student.

**Adults and children who are isolated and feel abandoned.** Such people often count on clergy and religious to listen to them and pray with them—and they must be able to count on religious to know and set boundaries. For example, a spiritual director of a man who had lost his family in a tragic accident decided (because of a painful previous experience) not to accept the directee's invitation to take him out to dinner. The directee eventually saw the wisdom in this decision.

**Adults who lack coping skills.** People often come to religious in pain, weakness, or when they are overwrought and overwhelmed with the activities of life. A hug at a time when someone feels a total loss of self-esteem may be intended as compassion by the caregiver but may mean something different to the recipient in pain.

**Adults and children burdened by poverty and oppression.** Some people have little financial security and must entrust their children and themselves to caretakers, including religious. They come for help in need and crisis. It is exceedingly important that religious not cross boundaries, take advantage of the needs of those in their care, or exploit them in any way.

**Minority clients.** In North America, where Caucasians are still the privileged class and where most religious are Caucasians, it is important that we enhance our awareness of multicultural values and needs. How religious speak, use touch, and otherwise relate to people affects the recipients of their pastoral care, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. Skilled ministers are aware of their own values and cultural

biases and how these may affect minority clients. They are additionally attuned to the ways they are able to help the recipients of their care understand, maintain, or resolve their own sociocultural identification without guilt or loss of self-esteem.

**Students of all ages.** Teachers are in a very influential position with students, no matter what the age. Many religious are gifted with such qualities as warmth, attentiveness, and compassion—all of which are important in a teacher. But what happens when a religious engages in a social relationship with a student outside of school and then must be the bearer of the bad news that he or she is not passing in class?

**Persons in initial formation.** The formation director who befriends the novice as a peer confuses the mentoring process. Most tragic are those situations in which a formation director engages in romantic or sexualized behavior with the person in formation. Rationalizations that "this is a relationship between two adults" are both inappropriate and self-serving.

While it is important to continue to respect values of equality and collaboration and to move beyond top-down models of relating, the imbalance of power between the recipient of help and the minister is significant and must be respected (see Table 1).

## UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS

Many do not recognize that boundary violations are often rooted in unresolved psychosexual issues. Clearly, those who choose a celibate way of life are not beyond sexual feelings and desires. To reject sexuality as irrelevant to ministry or as something less than good is to block any possibility for holistic spirituality.

It is essential that religious experience sexual feelings without judgment or suppression and that they integrate those feelings into the whole person. Unfortunately, religious sometimes fail to do the requisite body-mind-spirit work, resulting in unresolved emotional and sexual conflicts—which manifest themselves either as too much rigidity in relationships or as fused boundaries that result in feelings of being "trapped." Unresolved emotional conflicts not only block ministerial and spiritual growth but also can wound and scar others. Furthermore, they reap negative results in the body: less energy, physical ailments, even illness.

Historically, approaches to sexuality have too often been negative and repressive, leaving some religious with a lack of awareness about the importance of

**Table 1. Sources of Power and Vulnerability**

	<b>Power</b>	<b>Vulnerability</b>
<b>Role</b>	Religious as professional	Parishioner, client, person in formation, student, etc.
<b>Age</b>	Adult	Younger person
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Female
<b>Race</b>	Caucasian	Asian, African American, Hispanic, etc.
<b>Life Circumstances</b>	Security, well-being	Need, crisis
<b>Psychological Resources</b>	Emotional stability (actual or perceived)	Lack of coping skills
<b>Social Resources</b>	Support, community, family	Isolation, abandonment
<b>Physical Resources</b>	Ability, size, strength	Disability, weakness

Adapted, with permission, from "Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship" (workshop manual). © 1992 by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence (Seattle, Washington).

sexuality in ministry or with distorted and destructive notions of sexuality. Extreme distortion has tragically manifested itself in incidents of child sexual abuse and physical abuse. A far more common side-effect of repression is seen, however, in the subtle erosion of boundaries between the religious minister and the one ministered to, which can result in serious emotional wounds. Not working with inner conflicts makes transference and countertransference much more difficult to recognize.

### TRANSFERENCE DYNAMICS

Another reason dual relationships can become problematic is a lack of understanding of the underlying dynamics of helping relationships. This is particularly true when persons come to a religious with unfinished business of the past, such as unresolved emotional conflicts with authority figures. This underlying dynamic gives rise to transference—the reenactment of past emotional relationships in the here and now of the helping relationship. It involves the dynamic of transferring feelings, expectations, and behaviors from earlier parent-child relationships to the helper (unconsciously experienced as the pseudo-parent). For example, a parishioner who has been consistently submissive to a demanding parent may become submissive to a pastoral minister and do whatever the religious says or wills. Sometimes people idealize religious as they once did their parents, com-

plimenting them profusely, doing things for them, and neglecting themselves.

Transference dynamics occur in many relationships: director-directee, leader-member, doctor-patient, counselor-counselee, teacher-student, mentor-protégé, healer-client. The power of the transference is often increased in religious ministry because of the esteem in which people hold religious. People generally consider it safe to come to a religious when in trouble, expecting not to be hurt or mistreated in any way. Sisters, brothers, and priests frequently inspire awe just by virtue of their dedicated way of life. If a religious extends tenderness and compassion to a parishioner, that parishioner may feel especially touched, unconsciously recalling childhood experiences of longing for the nurturance of a parent (e.g., a parent who had difficulty loving). Transference can also work in negative ways. A parishioner may transfer blame onto a religious for problems the parishioner is experiencing. For example, a poor grade that is intolerable to a student may be blamed on the teacher's way of teaching. Such projections may be painful. If they are recognized for what they are, however, one can successfully navigate through the pain.

Understanding countertransference can be useful in preventing boundary violations. Countertransference—the helper's unconscious response to transference—has the capacity of intensifying and confusing the objective interaction, as the helper begins to lose clarity and insight regarding the nature of the interchange. For example, a student may idealize her



teacher as the all-good parent (transference). In turn, the teacher's unconscious desire for a mother-daughter relationship may cause her to be overprotective and lenient with the student (countertransference). On a deeper level, this interaction on the part of the religious may have something to do with her own childhood relationship with her mother, or lack thereof.

Loneliness, vulnerability, and loss can stir sexual longing and create countertransference reactions that, if left unprocessed, can add confusion to ministerial relationships. Religious should expect to encounter sexual reactions in themselves and in others in the course of their work. Someone once said that religious should consider themselves neither failures for having sexual feelings nor successes for pretending to avoid them. Sexual feelings need to be owned and processed in therapy, spiritual direction, supervision, support groups, and/or ministry groups.

## JUSTIFYING DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

When religious meet their needs for companionship and friendship at the expense of others' needs in ministry, they lose objectivity and possibly the ability to help. One must always ask these questions: Who serves whom? Whose needs are primary? For example, when a religious feels a need to go out frequently with parishioners, or when a counselor accepts counselees' invitations to lunch, something is amiss.

Some religious justify dual relationships as necessary, inevitable, and even helpful to clients. More often than not, we view such assessments as rationalization or denial. The mixing of personal and professional relationships is sometimes further reinforced by egalitarian ideologies. In some instances the spirit of inclusivity so beautifully encouraged by contemporary feminist thinking is manipulated into egalitarianism in the service of meeting a pastoral minister's needs.

Dual relationships should be avoided if at all possible. If a dual relationship seems unavoidable for some reason (e.g., the constraints of small-town life, the overlapping of roles), it is important that the religious discuss the inherent problems and possible consequences with the person involved and put into place whatever parameters might minimize the duality.

## IMPACT OF MISCONDUCT

Misconduct on the part of a religious almost always has harmful effects on the recipient, whether the issue is publicly known or not. Recipients of abuse suffer a loss of self-esteem and often find it difficult to trust a minister of the church again. They often feel

guilty or are made to feel guilty by the religious. If they feel sexual confusion, they often keep the matter hidden or repressed, lest others not believe them. Their anger can be displaced toward the entire church, the religious congregation, even God.

Furthermore, the person's capacity to develop a trusting relationship with other religious is impeded. Sometimes faith is lost in what religious congregations are about. If the congregations do not respond effectively to the recipient of the abuse or to the religious guilty of the misconduct, the victim often ceases to be an active member of the faith community.

A religious is viewed not only as a person in a ministerial or professional role, but also as an agent of the church. When emotional and spiritual harm are caused, there is a need for a compassionate pastoral response to the recipient of the abuse. The short- and long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse are now known, and they are serious. Much more research is needed regarding the effects of sexual and nonsexual misconduct on the part of adults with adults.

The adult recipient of abuse experiences a betrayal of trust, a distrust of religious authority, and the loss of a relationship that he or she relied on for help in attaining emotional, physical, or spiritual well-being. All of these result in spiritual, emotional, and sometimes physical suffering and damage to self-esteem. In the case of sexual abuse, there may also be an eroticization of religious feeling. Victims of abuse show harmful effects in relationships, including ambivalence, guilt, confusion, impaired ability to trust, rage, emotional instability, and cognitive dysfunctions (e.g., poor concentration, nightmares). Misconduct often has a harmful effect on the recipient's attempts at intimacy or forming stable relationships. In adult victims who have had traumatic childhoods, serious emotional trauma has been known to follow from such misconduct—as well as substance abuse (following the incident), self-injurious behavior, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal depression.

Usually, if the person is able to seek help fairly quickly, there is a much greater likelihood that the abuse will not have serious, long-lasting effects. It must be noted that misconduct is sometimes not interpreted by a recipient as abuse or even as a problem until it has gone on for some time. Recipients are often embarrassed or simply unaware of how the abuse has affected them until well after the fact. If the issue is not resolved, they may experience ambiguity in relationships or sexual orientation confusion, or they may withdraw from relationships, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to further victimization and erosion of self-esteem.

In the end, religious congregations will be judged not by whether they were guilty or not, but by whether they acted with integrity when they learned that one of their own was abusive, and whether they acted in a manner consistent with their religious mission and calling.

## PREVENTION OF HARM

A self-assessment is in order for any religious in active ministry. It is important that each religious take stock regarding how he or she exercises the role of a vowed religious professional by considering the following: What are the effects of his or her power on those with whom the religious interacts? In what areas might the religious be more vulnerable to violating boundaries? Can the religious identify his or her own emotional and sexual needs and meet them appropriately? Are his or her personal friendships and intimate relationships appropriate (i.e., respectful of public commitment, not dual relationships, not exploitative)? Is he or she willing to discuss personal sexual history with some other community member or spiritual director? Doing so can open new doors.

The most effective way to prevent misconduct in ministry is to nurture healthy relationships with colleagues (i.e., members within congregations), with others, and with God, as well as to pay heed to mind-body-spirit connections. Religious congregations need to affirm mutual friendships and encourage members to take time to nurture personal and familial relationships. For optimal ministerial health, religious should maintain close friendships away from professional ministries. Although this can be a challenge in some ministries, it is usually not impossible. Religious with intimate friendships outside the ministerial arena generally find it easier to maintain professional boundaries.

Asking the following questions can help one to be honest with oneself about friendships: Do I have friends who are peers, or are they all much older or much younger? Do I nurture community-based relationships? Do I have to be secretive about my relationships? If so, why? (Some mental health experts tell us that we are as dysfunctional as the number of secrets we keep.) If I cannot seem to form or sustain friendships, what am I doing about it? It is essential for religious to be open and honest about their relationships.

Another important preventive measure is taking good care of the self. If a religious is not in touch with his or her own feelings, for example, then that religious will not be able to recognize feelings in someone else. Feelings provide information when things are going

awry, and at the same time they are necessary for connection. Those assuming a ministerial role in relation to a parishioner must be alert to how their affective behavior is perceived by others, and they must also be sensitive to seductive behavior in others. It is often helpful to acknowledge sexual feelings to an objective colleague or within a ministerial support group. It is usually not advisable to acknowledge them to the person who is the object of the sexual feelings. If behavior toward the religious is sexualized by someone (e.g., parishioner, client, student, directee, staff person), it is important that the religious not respond. Maintaining a professional role, consulting with a colleague, and/or requesting supervision are all means by which the situation can be handled.

Losses—of self-esteem, job, good friends, family, health, reputation, financial status—create vulnerable moments in a person's life. The effective pastoral minister is aware of such moments and is able to name them. Additionally, the mature religious is comfortable with his or her sexuality and alert to how affective behavior is perceived by others. Unfortunately, some less mature religious prefer not to address sexual reactions. They ignore sexuality altogether and assume that keeping such feelings repressed makes celibacy easier. Actually, repression makes ministry more dangerous.

Finally, the healthy management of daily living—eating healthfully, exercising regularly, remaining faithful to prayer, taking time for fun and friendships—provides the foundation for a rich and meaningful ministry. Given the reality that every human being experiences times of struggle and inner conflict, religious who are self-reflective and insightful about their own inner lives and open to seeking assistance when conflicts emerge are well positioned to be helpful to others.

## MANAGEMENT OF TRANSFERENCE

Being in touch with personal feelings and countertransference assists the religious in recognizing feelings and transference dynamics in others. A helpful way to become aware of countertransference is to ask oneself, "What feelings do I have when I am with this person?" The response to this question leads, informs, and assists the religious in moving productively through a helping relationship in a manner that is both respectful and holy.

Astute religious are aware of the ramifications of touch. Transference can change what is simply a hug in the mind of a religious into a seductive advance in the mind of the recipient. Pastoral relationships, by their very nature, include warmth, caring, concern, sensitivity, and some degree of intimacy. Any misuse



of touch or a lack of understanding of the transference dynamic in touching those with whom the religious is journeying can have adverse consequences. It is essential that the motivation for touching be honestly explored. Touch is to be used in ministry only to address the needs of the person the religious is assisting, not to meet the needs of the religious.

## **PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

As religious are called to use their gifts in the service of others, the sharing of those gifts implies assuming the responsibility not to harm another in any way. Religious who have a sense of their own limitations and keep within the parameters of their ministerial and professional training (e.g., a religious who is not trained in counseling should not attempt to do counseling) witness to good stewardship over the gifts they have been given. Maximum professional effectiveness is achieved when boundaries are clear. Boundary issues are often addressed in professional ethical codes, which may include directives on maintaining strict confidentiality, not engaging in therapy with family members, not abandoning or in any way neglecting clients, avoiding imposing personal belief systems on others, maintaining proper interprofessional relationships, and so on. It is useful to review professional codes of ethics together in our respective ministries, including spiritual direction (which recently adopted its own ethical code). Ministries without articulated ethical codes may want to consider formulating them. Parish ministry is an example of a field that could benefit from an explicit code of ethics.

Another part of professional responsibility is to take time for professional development in order to remain abreast of changes in one's field of expertise. In addition, it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of emotional, sexual, and physical abuse in both children and adults.

## **STEPS ENSURING MINISTRY**

Congregations would be well served by educating their members on issues of sexuality, dual relationships, and boundaries. Focusing on these issues from a variety of professional perspectives (e.g., theology, psychology, pastoral law) provides a solid base for responsible development. Such education obviates the likelihood that unprocessed sexuality and unresolved conflicts will be played out in the ministerial arena. Addressing topics of intimacy, celibate chastity, and sexuality within dialogue in the community opens new doors and brings greater spiritual depth to both community and ministry.

Another preventive tool regarding ministerial misconduct is the initiation of ongoing process groups or support groups within a particular field of ministry or several different fields of ministry. Multiple congregations might collaborate in such endeavors. Whether these groups are structured or unstructured, the focus is on the person of the religious—his or her feelings, thoughts, and concerns, and how they affect what he or she is attempting to accomplish in ministry. The collegial relationships fostered in such groups are invaluable, as isolation can often lead to a loss of perspective and errors in judgment.

## **CONSULTATION AND SUPERVISION**

Supervision and consultation are helpful in any ministry. Periodically reviewing critical situations encountered in ministry is a good idea. Working with an objective expert in one's area of ministry enhances the quality of one's work. Consultation and supervision can be done individually or with groups. Typically, an individual or members of a group present both positive and negative incidents for consideration and critique. The feelings, thoughts, and concerns of the presenter are addressed in conversational style, support is given, and insights are shared.

## **CONGREGATIONAL POLICIES**

As a supplement to individual prevention, congregations can help their members preserve boundaries by encouraging openness and freedom in discussing failures as well as strengths in ministry. Congregations should develop a policy on misconduct if they do not already have one. In formulating such a policy, it is important to begin with the mission statement of the congregation as a base. Policies need to be sensitive to the protection of the vulnerable, including outreach to victim and family, as well as care for the religious who has allegedly engaged in misconduct. Policies should also address assistance for all facets of the community (e.g., parish, school, hospital) and, of course, for the religious congregation itself.

## **TRUST AND RESPONSIBILITY**

In the 1990s the theme of nonviolence has been prevalent in religious congregations' assemblies, chapters, and networking meetings. At its August 1996 annual assembly, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious chose for its theme "Imagining Leadership for a Nonviolent World." Nancy Schreck, O.S.F., reminded religious that when we imagine a nonviolent world, we experience ourselves as exiles in

a culture of violence. Religious are called to demonstrate a different way to be in society and to be aware of the more subtle forms of violence, including acts of ministerial misconduct. The religious is always in a position of trust and responsibility and needs to remember that any behavior that violates his or her commitment potentially inflicts harm on self, the congregation, others, and the church. Clearly, sexual activity between a religious and the recipient of help is always abusive to the latter.

As the new millennium approaches, religious must continue to model right relationships in ministry and with each other. By so doing, religious will contribute

to a restoration of balance in the ways of humankind, the systems of Mother Earth, and all creation.



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## Letter to the Editor

*Dear Editor:*

From time to time, you have addressed the topic of clergy sexual misconduct in HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, and you have done so with forthrightness and sensitivity. But today, although clear and effective policies are in place across Christian denominations, the problem is still very much with us.

Attitudes about women appear to be at the heart of many issues related to the misuse of power that makes individuals vulnerable to being sexually abusive or abused. Clergy sexual misconduct is closely associated with our society's failure to ensure that power is always used constructively. When power is misused, child and elder abuse, along with domestic violence, are among the deplorable outcomes.

You may want to inform your readers that the Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute (ISTI), located at Saint John's Benedictine Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, is presenting two upcoming workshops on the theme, "The Gift of Power in Communities of Faith: Creative or Destructive?" Hosting and cosponsoring the first, on May 17, 1997, is Saint Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland. The University of Saint Thomas, in Saint Paul, Minnesota, is cosponsoring and hosting the second workshop on June 28, 1997. Further information can be obtained by phoning (800) 436-8431 or writing to Collegeville Pastoral Institute, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500.

*Roman Paur, O.S.B.  
ISTI Executive Director*



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# BOOK REVIEWS

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*Modern American Religion: Under God, Invisible, 1941–1960* (Vol. III) by Martin E. Marty. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 560 pp. \$34.95.

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**T**here is a tendency to caricature the pre-Vatican II spirituality of American Catholics—either as an oppressive condition from which the Council liberated the church, or as an ideal to which we can return romantically. Of course, the reality is much richer and the context much more complex. Marty's rereading of the history of American religion, including Roman Catholicism and its variety of spiritual and cultural developments, is a good balance and helps place subsequent movements in more accurate perspective.

Marty addresses the influence of every element that came to maturity in the Council: biblical, liturgical, social engagement, religious and individual liberty, national loyalty and international concern, lay development, and the like. He also discusses elements that have produced conflicts, including the politicization of the church, intergroup tensions within the church and between religious groups, a variety of approaches to Rome, a narrowness of vision, and a complacency within church and personal spiritual life.

The recounting of the decades before Vatican II in the context of Jewish and Protestant life (both liberal and evangelical) highlights the variety and vitality of Catholicism as it emerged from its ethnic isolation through the Second World War, the post-war boom in education and religious interest, the cold war, and the eve of the Kennedy election and Vatican II. Marty touches on the full spectrum of life in each community. As for Catholicism, he roves from Dorothy Day to Joseph McCarthy, from Thomas Merton to the Christian Family Movement,

from the burgeoning college scene to emerging lay movements like the Grail.

What make this review of particular interest is its setting within the themes of similar and contrasting trends in Judaism and Protestantism on the eve of the Roman Catholic entrance into the ecumenical movement and serious interfaith dialogue. Marty documents the role of civil religion and the wider culture in the development of Catholic piety and church life. Discussions of such figures as Bishop Fulton Sheen and Francis Cardinal Spellman, and of such journals as *Commonweal* and *America*, help to give a synthetic view, paralleled by discussions of similar figures in Judaism and Protestantism and of journals including *Commentary*, *Christian Century*, and *Christianity Today*.

As the title notes, Marty takes American culture as a guiding principle. The tension between centrifugal forces and centripetal drives is his motif for analysis and synthesis. The overarching national developments are a good foil for looking at life within Catholicism and other religions. Sections treat the periods of World War II, the cold war, and the Eisenhower years. In each of these there are chapters on developments in Evangelicalism, ecumenically oriented Protestantism, Catholicism, and African American churches—and often women, journalistic and popular literature trends, and international attitudes as well.

In addition to the internal religious movements and literature, Marty looks at the public perception and expression of religion. For example, he develops the evolution of Supreme Court decisions and reasoning about religion and church and state, paralleling this with what religious thinkers (e.g., John Courtney Murray in the latter section) are writing and saying about the same themes. He examines the proponents and critics of the 1950s religious revival, the impact of the cold war mentality on the spirituality and witness of the various religious groups, and the rise of the state of Israel.

Marty recounts Catholics' and others' optimism about the world, American culture, and religion on



the eve of the Council. The shift in both the perception of and the American experience of Catholicism with the Kennedy election, the influence of optimism like that of Teilhard de Chardin, and the developments that led to the Council's *Gaudium et Spes* are recounted in parallel with similar developments in Judaism and the variety of streams within Protestantism. There is an irony that such a history discloses as the times begin to change in the era of the Council and subsequent developments in both Catholic culture (worldwide and in the United States) and American society.

While this period is more traumatic for the classical Protestant churches whose hegemony passes and whose ecumenical spirit begins to be shared with the largest U.S. church, Roman Catholicism, the sense of fifties renewal and early sixties optimism was a shared spiritual value that turned into the conflict of the late sixties and early seventies. These transpositions began a process of change in American religious culture, the final outcome of which has yet to be discerned.

The era of Roman Catholic assimilation is important to recall, as well as the era of tolerance that emerged, moving anti-Catholicism into the category of incivility. Catholics have become at ease in American culture. The depth of spiritual conversion about which John Paul speaks in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, before the church and the call to Christian unity, is easily muted in America by a complacency about the good feeling among religious people on the one hand, and by a certain insecurity about Catholic identity on the other. The real dialogue of conversion calls Christians to a spirituality that is open, based on a deeper unity—self-critical and culturally attuned—that can come only with hard work.

There are those who analyze the development of religion in modern America as a process of secularization. However, the recounting of the history of American spiritual life witnesses to a pluralization of religious consciousness and influences from psychology, civil religion, and other religious strains that do not diminish the religiosity of Americans but make it somewhat different from that found in other cultures. Inculturation and even syncretism are not alien to Catholicism in this cultural context. Marty's engaging style and breadth of research make this book easy reading, nourishing to the spirit as well as enlightening to the mind.

For the generations who have roots in the period before Vatican II, this book will be an expanding and refreshing review of their history. The generations who have no experience of those decades would do well to remember that those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. The book gives one a fresh

appreciation of the seriousness, richness, and complexity of America's spiritual streams on the eve of conciliar reform.

—Brother Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C.

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*Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* by Gil Bailie. New York, New York: Crossroad, 1995. 293 pp. \$24.95.

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A person reaching for a book of spiritual reading, or seeking a book that might be helpful in prayer or ministry or personal growth, would probably hesitate to pick up *Violence Unveiled*. For one thing, the author, Gil Bailie, has no name recognition among religious writers; he is a Catholic layperson, a lawyer turned student of culture. For another, the book is an anthropological study about the significant role violence plays in culture. Yet for the individual who reads carefully, reading and perhaps rereading *Violence Unveiled* can be a revelatory and formative experience of the first order.

Well-known authors—Rollo May; Robert Drinan, S.J.; Sam Keen; Elizabeth O'Connor—have written endorsements for the book's jacket: "prophetic in its insight"; "a book you will never forget"; "the single most important book of . . . prophetic theology to appear in our generation"; "it will form the reader's life for years to come." And the publisher, Crossroad—a house familiar to those in religious circles—declares that this is the most important book it has ever published.

Isn't this a bit of an exaggeration? Perhaps—but both the thesis of this work and the grace of style with which it is presented have enormous literary, intellectual, religious, and dramatic force.

Bailie's thesis (for which he credits the French anthropologist René Girard), if presented in a most simplified way, might be stated thus: (1) violence in human culture has played the role of creating the culture in the first place and then maintaining it, especially by sustaining social solidarity; (2) to fulfill this role, given the religious yearnings of human beings, violence has been clothed in the garb of the sacred, so that people will participate in violence as in a religious ritual; (3) violence, throughout history, maintained its sacred guise until it struck down the One whom we call Lord; (4) then violence was unveiled to reveal the demonic force that it is; and (5) the human cultures, which have been touched by this revelation, are gradually losing their credi-



bility when they attempt to proclaim that violence can be done in the name of God.

Although most of the book explores this thesis through various literary, historical, and biblical examples, Bailie returns often to several themes. One is the irony that is evident in the efforts of cultures to eradicate "bad" violence through "good" or "sacred" violence in order to maintain the cultural structures, under the guise of moral righteousness (e.g., by killing murderers through capital punishment; by opposing other cultures through war; or, in the biblical tradition, by expressing opposition to human sacrifice or any sacral sacrifice by killing the perpetrators). Bailie contends that the ploy of using violence to eradicate violence is, of course, a self-serving cultural lie and plays into the hands of the "father of lies." The claim of violence to moral righteousness has, however, become less and less credible since Jesus was killed by a morally righteous group, and empathy for victims has spread through cultures touched by the gospel.

Another theme that Bailie explores is that as the credibility of violence as a sacral force is diminished, the culture is thrown into a kind of upheaval because it is denied a prime way of maintaining itself. Citing numerous reports from weekly newsmagazines and daily newspapers, Bailie makes his point with great clarity. He posits that the social disintegration now taking place is rooted in the incredibility of violence, which is slowly but inevitably spreading through cultures influenced by the power of the cross.

The cross confronts every culture by speaking against violence. The gospel is really calling for a culture beyond violence. What such a culture might look like is what Jesus tried to draw our attention to by his own way of living. Bailie summarizes much of what he has to say on this theme by noting that "perhaps the *anthropological* role of the Christian Church in human history might be oversimplified as follows:

To undermine the structures of sacred violence by making it impossible to forget how Jesus *died* and to show the world how to live without such structures by making it impossible to forget how Jesus *lived*."

While Bailie is concerned with anthropology, it is not difficult to see how the implications of his themes, in their radical and formative challenge, apply to the individual as well.

Bailie writes with a depth and beauty, an intelligence and subtlety that are nothing short of masterful. His points, expressed with directness and simplicity and without pedantry, are supported by compelling illustrations from a vast array of literary and biblical sources and examples from current events. Yet his presentation also moves in wide circles of thought, and the chapters and subchapters of the book are interrelated from beginning to end.

Bailie calls into question or extends the thought of such scholars as Sigmund Freud on human desire, Joseph Campbell on myth, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger on philosophy, and Rudolf Otto on the idea of the sacred, as well as unnamed biblical scholars and the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* on various biblical passages. Bailie's own explications of biblical texts, from Genesis to the New Testament, reveal startling and inspiring profundity and creativity.

Even though *Violence Unveiled* is neither a typical religious book nor one that focuses on psychology or spirituality per se, it presents a profound cultural analysis and vision that can be personally challenging. It points to the essence of what constitutes personal religious conversion. For a person wishing to understand the scriptures more deeply and to appreciate the meaning of Jesus' life and death more radically, *Violence Unveiled* might well be one of the most important books he or she could read for a long time.

—Joseph F. Schmidt, F.S.C.